A PLEA
For the Life of
Dying Religion
from the Word of the Lord:
IN A
SERMON

Preached to the *GENERAL ASSEMBLY* of the *COLONY* of the *MASSACHUSETS* at *Boston in New-England*, May 16. 1683.

Being the Day of *ELECTION* there.

By Mr. *Samuel Torrey* Paſtor of the Church of Chriſt at *Waymouth.*

Rev. 3. 1. *I know thy works that thou haſt a name, that thou liveſt and art dead.* 2. *Be watchful and ſtrengthen the things which remain, which are ready to dye.*

Deut. 30. 19. *I call heaven and earth to Record this day againſt you that I have ſet before you life and death, bleſſing and curſing, therefore chuſe life that both thou and thy ſeed may live.* 20 *That thou mayeſt love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayeſt obey his voice, and that thou mayeſt cleave to him, for he is thy life.*

Hoſea 6. 1. *Come let us return to the Lord.*——— 2 *After two dayes he will revive us, and in the third day he will raiſe us up, and we ſhall live in his ſight.*

BOSTON IN NEW-ENGLAND

Printed by *Samuel Green* for *Samuel Sewall.* 1683.

HARVARD
COLLEGE
LIBRARY

Gift of
Hon. Hutchinson
Jan. 17, 1774

TO THE READER.

IT was the Importunate Solicitation of many, and more eſpecially of them whoſe Requeſt cauſed the Sermon emitted herewith to be Preached, that prevailed with the Reverend and Worthy Author, ſo far to gratifie their deſires, as to let others have a Copy of what he delivered on ſo Solemn an Occaſion; leaving it with them to diſpoſe of, as they ſhould ſee cauſe. I have peruſed it with great ſatisfaction, finding it to be not only an affectionate and awakening, but a rational and judicious Diſcourſe, and than which nothing can be more ſeaſonable.

It hath often been affirmed (and truly) that the diſtinguiſhing *Character* whereby *New-England* is differenced from other *Out-goings* of the *Engliſh Nation*, is, in that the great motive inducing the *firſt Planters*, to remove themſelves and theirs into a waſt and howling Wilderneſs, was (like that of the Children of *Iſrael* of old) *the Intereſt of Religion*, which their Souls were concerned for. And whileſt Men continued faithful to that bleſſed deſign (as the Prophet ſaid to *Jehojakim*) *it was well with them.* They that ſought firſt the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs, had other things added to them which they never thought, nor could in reaſon hope to enjoy. Nor did any Weapon formed againſt us in thoſe dayes proſper. The Lord hath cauſed us, and all the World about us, to ſee that Religion is our life. That this Intereſt, without which we our ſelves cannot live, hath been for many years languiſhing and dying, is the obſervation of all men that have their hearts exerciſed in diſcerning things of this nature.

The complaint is, that *N-England* is not to be found in *N-England*, but we are become like the reſt of the Nations, being grown into the ſame conformity to the World, with other Plantations, whoſe Intereſt and profeſſion never was, as ours hath been. There is a woful decay as to externals and the Form of Religion amongſt the Profeſſors of it. Hearing the Word as to the publick diſpenſation thereof, Prayer with Faſting, and other religious Exerciſes (which reach no further than the *Form of Godlineſs*) are not ſo frequent as in former dayes; and that is a moſt certain ſign that the power of Godlineſs is much more in a bleeding and dying ſtate. It is not then to be wondered at, if the tenour of divine Diſpenſation hath of

later times been changed towards us: The hand of God hath been heavy upon many places in the Land, he hath ſmitten us with a deadly deſtruction. The killing Sword, a mortal Contagion, and other judgements have threatned life it ſelf. And ſince we have let Religion die, we have been in greater danger than ever of being deprived both of our Political and Eccleſiaſtical life. Let us not be high-minded but fear. If we do not in this our Day know the things of our peace, ſo as to recover the life of Religion, the conſideration of Gods holy ſeverity towards others, may cauſe trembling of heart, leſt at laſt the Lord do unto us as he hath done unto them. Are we better than *Shiloh*, where the Houſe of God continued almoſt four hundred Years? Are we better than *Jeruſalem*, the perfection of Beauty and Joy of the whole Earth? Are we better than the Churches in *Aſia*, planted by the Apoſtles themſelves, and amongſt whom there was once a gracious and glorious preſence of the Son of God? But thoſe Candleſticks are long ago removed out of their Places, not ſo much as one of them remaining. Becauſe they have loſt their Religion they have loſt their lives and beings. A late Hiſtorian, who about twelve years ago was in thoſe parts, ſaith, that horrour took hold upon him as he was viewing the doleful Ruins of thoſe once Glorious Churches, fearing leſt the ſins of other places, which as yet enjoy the Goſpel, might in time expoſe them to the like miſeries. He ſaith, that in *Epheſus*, there are now only a few Cottages, and not ſo much as one Chriſtian dwelling there. *Smyrna*, is at this day a conſiderable place in reſpect of Trade, but no ſettled Inhabitants there, to uphold ſo much as the Name of Chriſtians, excepting a few Superſtitious *Greeks*. In *Pergamus*, there are but fifteen Families of Chriſtians, and thoſe in a ſtate moſt miſerable, both as to Spirituals and Temporals. In *Thyatira* the *Turks* have eight *Moſches*, but very few Chriſtians now reſiding there. *Sardis*, which was once the Metropolis of *Lydia*, is now a beggerly Village, Earthquakes and Wars having brought that famous City under horrid deſolations. There is nothing like a Church there. In *Philadelphia*, there is a greater number of Men calling themſelves Chriſtians, than in any of thoſe *Aſiatick* Churches, excepting *Smyrna*. For in that City are two hundred Families of thoſe who are called Chriſtians, but they are Idolaters, and in miſerable ſlavery to the cruel *Turks*. As for *Laodicea*, which was once a rich and populous place; and the Buildings in it exceeding magnificent, it is now utterly deſolated, not ſo much as one Inhabitant there, excepting

Wolves

Wolves and doleful Creatures. Thus did all these famous Places, and Churches, by losing Religion lose their own Lives and Beings. Time was when in *Africa*, there were many thousands of Churches, but the true Religion being gone out of that vast Continent (thrice as big as *Europe*) what but Death is to be seen there? Let us look nearer home: In the Land of our Fathers Sepulchres, there were Churches amongst the antient *Britains*, but when those sins of Pride Drunkenness, Contention, Worldliness, notwithstanding *Gildas* and other faithful Ministers did zealously testifie against them, became common and prevailing Evils: God first sent a sweeping Plague amongst them; and when that Besom af Destruction could not *Reform* them, the Lord brought the *Saxons* upon them, who rooted them out of their Land. And if we consider the dispensations of God since the *Reformation* successfully begun by the Ministry of *Luther, Zuinglius, Calvin*, and other great Champions for the Truth; how many Protestant Churches in *Saxony, Bohemia, Hungaria, Poland, France*, and other places have been dissipated and unchurched, and that because of their decayings, either as to the profession or practice of Religion? If the Professors thereof be generally grown Formal and Lifeless, it is a sad prognostick that a terrible Persecution is near at hand. Upon which account, wise men do with some dread, behold the present state of the *Protestant Interest* in the World, the names of those that are indeed alive being so very few.

As for the Churches in this Wilderness; I am perswaded Christ will not suffer them to be made a Desolation as yet. Though *Israel* was deeply revolted from the holy wayes of God in the dayes of *Jehoahaz*, it is said, 2 *King.*13.23. *And the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and would not destroy them, nor cast he them from his presence as yet.* Nevertheless, shaking Trials may come. We have reason to expect them, and God prepare us for them. For great Sins are now common in *New-England*, which were rarely (if at all) heard of but thirty years ago, Prophaness groweth bold, and is not easily suppressed. There is much Hypocrisie and Formality amongst Professors: nay, and wise Virgins are asleep too. It is beyond controversie, that the late Judgements which *New-England* hath been bleeding under, were an effect of Divine anger, provoked by the sins of Men. But since God hath mercifully removed his hand, those very sins the Lord hath been contending for, are committed as much, nay more than ever before.

It is a moſt awful and trembling conſideration, that the Holy Lord God almighty (who though he may bear long will not ſuffer himſelf to be abuſed alwayes) hath been mocked and dallied with more than once. In the day of our late trouble, ſeveral things were acknowledged to be *Provoking Evils*, and *Reformation* in reſpect of them confeſſed to be neceſſary; which ſince are made light of. *Auſtin* did in his time, wiſh that there might be a Synod called to conſider of ſome effectual courſe for the ſuppreſſion of that ſin of Drunkenneſs amongſt men in thoſe dayes. Theſe Churches, have in a very ſolemn manner met together by their Repreſentatives, to enquire into *the cauſes of the Lords diſpleaſure; and the expedients for Reformation.* There was a gracious preſence of Chriſt guiding his Servants in thoſe Enquiries. But what doth it all come to, more than to leave the preſent Generation inexcuſable before the World, and before Poſterity, and before God in the day of his pleading with thoſe that have known their Maſters Will, but have not done it? The infinitely patient God hath waited for fruit three years ſince that endeavour and pretence to *Reformation* was publiſhed. Our *Engliſh* Hiſtorians have Recorded, that when the ſins of the times brought heavy Judgements upon our fore-Fathers, above nine hundred years ago; a *Synod* did convene in order to the redreſſing of thoſe evils. There were thirty Miniſters then found faithful, who gave their Teſtimony: but it would not be hearkened to; ſo that God quickly ſent the cruel *Danes*, who for a long time brought the Land into miſerable Bondage and Slavery. What hours of Temptation may come upon us, we know not: Our caſe is the more dangerous, and the Judgements impending like to be the more dreadful when (if Repentance prevent not) at laſt they ſhall fall down; in that God hath ſtirred up the ſpirits of his Servants in the Miniſtry full many a time, and with great earneſtneſs to proteſt againſt the Sins and Apoſtaſies of the times; and to preſs for *Reformation before the Decree bring forth*: but Alas! hitherto with little ſucceſs. The words of that honourable Man of God, Dr. *Owen* (in his late Sermons on *Luk.* 13.1,2,3. *Page* 77.) have a great deal of truth and weight in them. "*Let us not* (ſaith he) *pretend that the Repentance and Reformation* "*called for, reſpects the publick enormous ſins of the Nation, in Atheiſm,* "*Prophaneneſs, Senſuality, Luxury, Pride, Oppreſſion, Hatred of the Truth,* "*Contempt of the Miniſtry of the Goſpel, and the like; they do ſo indeed,* "*but not only, they reſpect alſo the Decays in Faith, Love, Zeal, with* "*love of the World, Conformity unto it, Luke-warmneſs, that are found*

"*amongſt*

" *amongſt the moſt eminent Profeſſors of Religion. This is our preſent* " *wound; here lies our weakneſs; namely, in the want of a quick, active,* " *zealous Miniſtry, to call and ſtir up Magiſtrates and People to effectual* " *Repentance and turning to God. Unleſs this be given unto us, I fear* " *we cannot be ſaved. If it be otherwiſe, if we have a Miniſtry that* " *really do attend unto their Duty in this matter, then I ſhall think it the* " *moſt pregnant ſign of approaching Deſtruction: Seeing it is apparent* " *unto all, that their Endeavours have neither Fruit nor Succeſs?* Truly with us it hath been ſo: They that have approved themſelves faithful unto Chriſt and their own Conſciences in this matter, have indeed inward peace. Yet they cannot but be ſenſible that they loſe the good Word and good Will of ſome Men; and are expoſed to obloquy and reproaches. For as the Excellent Perſon but now mentioned ſaith, (*Page* 90.91.) " *The hardeſt and moſt difficult ſervice* " *that ever God called any of his Miniſters unto, excepting only Jeſus* " *Chriſt and his Apoſtles, hath been in the endeavouring the Reformation* " *of backſliding or ſpiritually decayed Churches. Theſe are the* two Wit- " neſſes *which in all ages* have propheſied in Sack-cloth. *Such was* " *the Miniſtry of* Elijah, *which brought him unto that Concluſion, and an* " *earneſt longing to be delivered by Death from his Work and Miniſtry,* " 2 King. 19. 4. *So was that of* Jeremiah, *in the like ſeaſon, whereof he* " *complains,* Chap. 15. 10. John the Baptiſt *in the ſame work loſt firſt* " *his liberty, then his life, And in after Ages* Chryſoſtom, *for the* " *ſame cauſe was hated by the* Clergy, *perſecuted by the* Court, *and at* " *length driven into* Baniſhment, *where he died. Moſt men care not* " *how little a ſhare they have in ſuch a work as this, whoſe reward will* " *reach them according to the proportion of their engagement in it. All* " *Churches, all Perſons almoſt, would willingly be let alone in the condition* " *wherein they are: They that would preſs them unto due Reformation,* " *ever were, and ever will be looked on as their* Troublers.

Nevertheleſs, God hath given a ſpirit of Courage, Zeal and Faithfulneſs unto ſeveral of his Ambaſſadors to diſcharge their Duty in bearing their Teſtimony, and ſo to leave the ſucceſs, and their own Names alſo, with that God whoſe they are, and whom they ſerve. And in ſpecial this Worthy Miniſter of Chriſt, whoſe eminent Accompliſhments are known unto all unto whom he himſelf is known, hath a long time approved himſelf ſingularly Faithful unto God and the Souls of Men herein. The ſtrain of his Miniſtry, in that Congregation, where He that holds the Stars hath ſeen meet to place him, hath been to urge Converſion and Reformation. And

not

not only ſo, but when God hath given him an opportunity (more than once) to ſpeak in the Name of the Lord unto this People, (in reſpect of the Heads and Repreſentatives thereof) he hath delivered his own Soul, by giving Warning; and what he hath ſpoken ſhall turn to him for a Teſtimony. It is an hazardous thing (as much as life is worth) for men not to comply with the Word of God, by whomſoever or to whomſoever ſpoken. If a *Joſiah* regard not the Word of God ſpoken by a *Pharaoh Necho*, he loſes his Life for it; and ſo did *Zedekiah*, becauſe he humbled not himſelf before *Jeremiah* the Prophet ſpeaking from the mouth of the Lord. Its true that Miniſters in theſe dayes, have no immediate Call or Commiſſion from Heaven; yet if they deliver ſuch Meſſages as are according to the Law and the Teſtimony, it is God that ſpeaketh by them; and many times their hearts are inclined to this or that ſubject, by a ſpecial operation of the ſpirit of Chriſt, who is with his Servants to the end of the World. Let us then hear that ſo our ſouls may live.

God of his free Grace, hath ſeen meet to dignifie an handful of his People, who are ſeparated from their Brethren, with the chief and choiceſt of Bleſſings. It is promiſed as an high favour, *Jer.* 30. 21. *Their Nobles ſhall be of themſelves, and their Governours ſhall proceed from the midſt of them.* We have had theſe over us, who have been (as the Expreſſion of the Antient is) *Nobiles genere, Nobiliores ſanctitate.* We cannot be thankful enough for that Bleſſing. Civil Liberty is an invaluable mercy. The *Jewiſh Rabbins* have a ſaying, that *if the Sea were Ink and the Earth Parchment, it would not be ſufficient to write down the praiſe due to God for liberty.* But what then ſhall be ſaid concerning the Liberties of the Goſpel? we enjoy all at this day. The way to have them continued, is, for us to approve our ſelves faithful to the intereſt of Religion. For then God will be for us; and if he be for us, who can be againſt us.

Boſton in *N. England.*
Auguſt 31. 1683.

INCREASE MATHER.

A PLEA FOR THE LIFE OF Dying Religion.

DEUT. 32. 47.
— *Because it is your Life* —

IT hath pleased the great and blessed God in his infinite Soveraignty, to transact with Man about the everlasting Concernments of his immortal Soul; to dispense both his Mercy and Justice, both Life and Death; to distribute Eternal Rewards, and Punishments, and to govern Man unto his Eternal State, only *in the way of a Covenant*. All Reprobate Sinners are destroyed and damned under the Curse and Condemnation of the *Covenant of Works*: All God's Elect are saved by and through our Lord Jesus Christ, according unto, and under the *Covenant of Grace*. God hath constituted the *Covenant of Redemption*, in his own Eternal Counsel, before the World was; and therein laid the Foundation, both of the Constitution, and Administration of the Covenant of Grace in, by, & through that one only great, and glorious Mediator Jesus Christ, whose work it is to bring a certain Elect number of fallen Man unto God; concerning

whom he ſaith, *I will be their God, and they ſhall be my People.* Hence God ever hath had, and ever will have a *Covenant-People* in the World, untill this Diſpenſation of Grace ſhall be conſummated in Glory. *And when the moſt High divided to the nations their Inheritance, and ſeparated the ſons of Adam; He ſet the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Iſrael: For the Lord's Portion is his People, and Jacob the Lot of his Inheritance.* Deut. 32. 8, 9. This Book it may be (in ſome reſpects) moſt properly called *The Book of the Covenant:* becauſe it contains, not only a more full & plain *Revelation* & *Expoſition* of the Covenant it ſelf, in the conſtitution, way, manner, & means of the Adminiſtration, & Confirmation of it; & of the *All-Sufficiency of God unto his People therein,* as their God in Covenant; but alſo a deſcription of that notable *Covenant-Tranſaction,* wherein all the Duties, all the Bleſſings, and all the Curſes of the Covenant, are expreſly and in ſet form propoſed, and the people moved unto the moſt ſolemn Reſtipulation of their Souls to God under the moſt ſacred and indiſpenſible Obligations to live to him, and walk with him by religious Fear, Reverence, Faith, Love, and Obedience, as his Covenant-people, for ever: and this ratified and confirmed by a moſt awful Conteſtation, whereby Heaven and Earth are called to record. *Deut.* 30. 19, 20. *I call Heaven & Earth to record this day againſt you, that I have ſet before you Life and Death, Bleſſing and Curſing: therefore chuſe Life, that both thou and thy ſeed may live.* And now *Moſes,* having thus finiſhed his great and extraordinary Miniſtry, wherein he had been accompanied with an extraordinary preſence and power of God, and was eminently a *Type* of Chriſt, he doth prepare himſelf inſtantly, to take leave of the *People,* of his *Work,* and of the *World.* The people he incourageth, by a promiſe of God's Preſence, to make their Progreſs unto, and Enterance into, and full Poſſeſſion of the Land of Promiſe: His *Office* and *Work* he reſigneth unto *Joſhuah,* whom he did by divine appointment ordain his Succeſſor,

ceſſor, charging of him with the Care and Conduct of the People unto their Reſt in *Canaan*; and this upon full aſſurance that God would be with him, and that he would never *fail him nor forſake him.* The *Law* which he had received of the Lord, and delivered unto the people, containing the whole *Word* and *Worſhip* of God, and ſo their whole *Religion*, together with a *prophetical Song*, ſhewing the diverſe State of that Church and People in ſucceeding Ages, under the ſucceſſive Diſpenſation of the Covenant; *this Law*, and *this Song* he delivers to the Prieſts and People for their improvement, charging of them moſt earneſtly and affectionately to *ſet their hearts unto it, becauſe it was their Life.* Theſe words (*becauſe it is thy Life*) they are ſome of the laſt words of *Moſes* that great Prophet; and therefore they contain matter of the greateſt Importance to the People of God. They are (together with the Context) *his laſt, his farewell* and *dying Charge*, whereby he ſet himſelf, in a ſentence or two, to ſpeak all at once; to deliver unto them the Sum or a Syſtem of all that Doctrine and Duty, which he had before, throughout the whole courſe of his Miniſtry, been delivering unto them; all that they were to *know, to believe, or to practiſe*; the whole both of *Faith* and *Obedience*, that is, more plainly, their whole *Religion.* And he chargeth them to *ſet their hearts unto it*; that is, to priſe it, love it, keep it, cleave to it, live and walk in the ſincere, pure, powerfull Profeſſion and Practice of it, with all their hearts, with all their minds, with all their Souls, with all their might, and with all their ſtrength, from Generation, unto Generation, *themſelves, and their Children, for ever.* And thus he moves them to *ſet their hearts unto Religion; Becauſe it is their Life.* Whence we have this

DOCT. *That Religion it is the Life of the Covenant-People of God.*

Our Text and Doctrine deliver the great and univerſal Reaſon of the Profeſſion and Practice of our Religion; *Viz.*

Becauſe it is our Life. *Religion*, in the moſt full and comprehenſive notion of it, It is that whereby Man is qualified, and capacitated to live unto God, to live with God, to live upon God, to ſee and to injoy God in Chriſt, as the Only and All-ſufficient Author of Life, and Object of Bleſſedneſs, and Happineſs, as his laſt End, and chief Good. *Religion* comprehends Man's Deliverance from all, both *moral* and *miſerable* Evil; both Sin, Death, and Hell: as alſo all, both *moral* and *beatifical Good*; Holineſs, Happineſs, Grace and Glory. And it is conſummated in a perfection of Beatifical Viſion, and Fruition, by the Light and Life of Heaven. In the Explication I am to ſhew

1. *That Religion is Life.*
2. *That it is the Life of the Covenant-people of God.*

1. *Religion it is Life*; that is,

1. *The true and pure Religion*; *It is originally, and only from God*, the living God, the God of all Life, who is Life it ſelf in the abſtract, and the Fountain of Life to all living: Religion it ariſeth from, and is founded in the very Being and Nature of the bleſſed God. If there were no ſuch God, there could be no ſuch Religion. Religion it is of God, both in a way of *divine Revelation*, and in a way of *divine Operation*. It is purely of divine Revelation, reſpecting both the *Doctrine of it*, & the *ſpiritual ſupernatural* and *ſaving Knowledge* of it. It is that whereby God hath revealed himſelf unto man, and whereby man hath that ſaving Knowledge of God, and Jeſus Chriſt his Son which is *Life eternal*. Joh. 17. 3. It is that whereby *God hath commanded Light to ſhine out of Darkneſs*; and (by the enlightening power of his Spirit) *ſhined into our hearts, and given us the light of the knowledge of his Glory, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*. 2 Cor. 4. 6. *It his marveilous Light*. 1 Pet. 2. 9. Religion, it is alſo from God in a way of *divine Operation*: It is the moſt powerful Effect of the quickening power and operation of the Spirit of God as a *Spirit of Life* upon the creature: hence it is phraſed the *Life of God*. Eph. 4. 8. Religion,

it

it is the moſt glorious created Emanation of ſpiritual, heavenly, and divine Light and Life from God, as the fountain of both. *Pſal.* 36. 9. *For with thee is the Fountain of Life; in thy Light ſhall we ſee Light.*

2. *Religion it is alſo from Chriſt the Mediator*: It is founded in the Perſon, Office, and Work of Chriſt. The being of Religion, the light, life, good, bleſſedneſs, and happineſs of it, it is all from the Merit, Satisfaction and Interceſſion of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and from the power and operation of his Spirit. Religion, it conſiſteth in our Faith in Chriſt, and Obedience unto Him; and in our practical, and experimental Union, & Communion with his Perſon, and the Application of all his Benefits, even eternal Life. Thus Religion it is our Life, becauſe thereby we are made partakers of Chriſt, who is *the Reſurrection, and the Life.* Joh. 11. 25. *The Way, the Truth, and the Life.* Joh. 14. 6. By having of whom, *we have Life.* 1 Joh. 5. 12. & *who is our Life.* Coloſ. 3. 4. Chriſt is the great *PATRON* and *PROFESSOR* of our Religion. He hath confirmed it by his own perſonal *Profeſſion* and *Practice*, when on earth; and is himſelf the great *Apoſtle and High Prieſt of our Profeſſion.* Heb. 3. 1. Whence it is moſt properly called the *Chriſtian Religion.*

3. *Religion, it is, reſpecting the Principles of it, Life.* The Principles of it are *living Principles, Principles of Life.* Religion, it is wrought into the hearts of men, by the quickening power of the Spirit, in that ſaving work of Grace, wherein we are *raiſed from Death unto Life*; wherein we are *paſſed from Death unto Life.* 1 Joh. 3. 14. Religion, it is our *ſpiritual Reſurrection*, and ſo it is our ſpiritual Life.

4. *Religion in the practice of it, it is the only way of Life.* It is by the performance of Religious Duties, that men walk in the way of Life. Practical Religion, it is the *narrow way which leadeth to Life.* Mat. 7. 14. It is that *way of Life which is above to the wiſe, to depart from Hell beneath* Prov. 15. 24. It is the *Everlaſting Way.* Pſal. 139. 24.

5. *Re-*

5. *Religion, in the visible external Forms of it, in all the religious Institutions, Constitutions, and Administrations, which are of divine Appointment, so it is the only Means of Life,* that whereby God gives Life, or works Life, In which sence it is said, *Salvation is of the Jews.* Joh. 4. 22. Religion, it is the *living Waters, the Waters of Life, the Tree of Life: which gives Life to the Nations.* Ezek. 47. 8, 9. Zech. 14. 8. Rev. 22. 1, 2. Where Religion is, there are all the Means of Life, and the saving Improvement of those Means. Where Religion is not, there is no Day of Grace, no Means of Grace, no Life, no Salvation.

6. *Religion, it is that wherein and whereby man is brought to God, to Christ, to God in Christ.* It is that whereby we do know God, acknowledge him, fear him, believe, hope, and trust in him, love, serve, worship, and glorifie God; and whereby we come to God, converse with God, have Communion with God, and receive all saving Communications from God, through Jesus Christ: It is that whereby men move and act towards, and upon God; in and by which *God dwells with men on earth*; it is that whereby we do apprehend, cleave unto, and live upon God, *as our Life.* Deut. 30. 20. *That thou mayest love the Lord thy God —— and cleave to him: for He is thy Life.* Thus Religion, in the *Principles* of it, it is *Life*; in the *Practice of it*, is the *Way of Life*; in the *visible and external Forms and Institutions of it*, it is the *Means of Life*; and respecting the *original Object*, and *Ends of it*, it comes from, and leads and brings us up unto God in Christ, who is our Life. Thus it is demonstrated that Religion is Life.

Secondly, *That Religion is Life to the Covenant-People of God:* that is,

1. *It is their spiritual Life*, that whereby they *live spiritually.* It is that whereby every single Saint lives the Life of *Grace*, and *Holiness*; the Life of *Faith*, and *New Obedience.* The spirit and power of Religion in the heart, it is *Life* to the

the Soul, and gives being to the *New Creature.* Rom. 8. 6. *To be ſpiritually minded, it is Life.* Hence Religion, it is that which makes the People of God *a Living People.* God's People muſt be a living People. Whenever God takes a People to be his People, He quickens them with ſpiritual Life, and makes them *a Living People.* Ezek. 37. 6. — *And ye ſhall live, and ye ſhall know that I am the Lord.* & *V.* 14. *And ſhall put my Spirit in you, and ye ſhall live.* Hence Religion, it is *Life from the dead* to any People. *Rom.* 11. 25. — *What ſhall the Receiving of them be, but Life from the dead?* The Converſion of the *Jews* ſhall be Life from the dead to the World, by a general and glorious reſurrection of Religion.

2. *Religion, it is the Life of the Covenant-People of God*; i. e. *It gives them their ſpiritual Being, and Conſtitution under Covenant-Relation unto God.* It gives a People their ſpiritual Standing before God as his People, his Covenant-People. It is the eſſence and ſubſtance of the Covenant. *Heb.* 8. 10. *For this is the Covenant I will make with the Houſe of Iſrael after thoſe days: I will put my Laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they ſhall be to me a People.* taken from *Jer.* 31. 33. Religion in this ſence conſtitutes the Covenant, and is the ſpiritual Conſtitution of the Covenant-People of God. 1 *Pet.* 2. 9. *But ye are a choſen Generation, a royal Prieſthood, an holy Nation, a peculior People.* It follows *V.* 10th *Which in time paſt were not a People; but now are the People of God.* Without Religion, they were *no People:* but Religion made them *the People of God.*

3. *Religion, it is the Life of the Covenant-People of God, as to their Political Conſtitution in viſible Church-ſtate and Order, under the Adminiſtration of all Ordinances.* Religion gives a People their viſible Standing under the viſible Diſpenſation of God's Covenant, and Adminiſtration of his Kingdom; as in our Text. *For it is your Life; and by this thing ye ſhall prolong your days in the Land whither ye go over Jordan to poſſeſs it.* It was their Religion, which gave them a Standing and Settlement

tlement in that Land, the *land of Promiſe*, in the full poſſeſſion of their viſible Covenant Intereſts and Enjoyments, as the Covenant-people of God. So that it remains a manifeſt plain Truth from the Word of God, that *Religion is the Life of the Covenant-people of God.* The Application follows.

USE. I. It is for our Information and Inſtruction in divers Particulars.

1. *That there is, there can be but One only, true, real Religion, and no more.* Religion hath been, is, and ever will be *One & the ſame* unchangeably. And becauſe there is but One God, but One Lord Jeſus Chriſt, One Spirit, One work of Redemption, One way of Application, One Doctrine of Godlineſs, One Faith, One Obedience, One and the ſame moral Worſhip, One Covenant of Grace, One Covenant-people of God, One Family and Houſhold of God, One State both of Grace and Glory, One Life, One Heaven; therefore conſequently but One Religion. All the ſincere People of God in the World ever have been, and ever ſhall be *One* in the Profeſſion, and Practice of this *One Religion*; whereby all God's Elect *are gathered together in One, in Chriſt*, and perfected both in Grace and Glory, unto the completion and perfection of the myſtical Body of Chriſt which is *the fullneſs of Him who filleth all in all.* Eph. 1. 10, & 23. True it is, the Apoſtle grants (1 *Cor.* 8. 5.) that there are which are *called gods — as there be gods many, and lords many.* So there be that are called religions, ſuch religions many: But as the Apoſtle concludes, *V.* 6. *but to us there is but One God — and One Lord Jeſus Chriſt:* So ought we to conclude, that *to us there is but One Religion*; which is the *pure Religion, and undefiled before God, and the Father.* Jam. 1. 27. This is the Religion, without which there is, there can be no Life, or Salvation.

2. *That this Religion, it is the Supreme thing in this lower World*; viz. becauſe it is, in all reſpects, *our Life*, and that nothing elſe is ſo. *Religion*, in the full and whole nature and

notion

notion of it, is the moſt glorious effect and product of divine Wiſdom, Power, Grace, Mercy, Goodneſs, Truth, and Faithfullneſs; yea, of the whole divine Sufficiency, and Efficiency, in the accompliſhment of all God's eternal Counſels concerning his own Glory, in the Salvation of his *Elect*. *Religion*, it comprehends all the whole Intereſt of God, of Chriſt, and of his Church and People in this World; all that is *heavenly*, *ſpiritual*, and *divine*; all that is of *Heaven* upon Earth, reſpecting both *State*, *Intereſt*, and *Enjoyment*. It gives a Being & Standing to all Saints, both in Grace, and in Glory. Oh! Religion it is a marvellous high, and heavenly thing! All the real worth and excellency that is in the World, it is from Religion. There would be nothing of God, that is, of the knowledge of God, of the ſpiritual, gracious, and ſaving Preſence of God, were it not for Religion. Thoſe who are without Religion, are *without God in the World*. Eph. 2. 12. We have no more of God, than we have of Religion. Again, there could have been no *Good*, or *Goodneſs* in the World; had it not been for Religion. The World would have been a meer *Vacuum* of all good, nothing elſe but a receptacle of deſperate Sinners; a very Hell of Sin, and Miſery; there could have been nothing of Light, or Life, or Grace, Holineſs, or Happineſs; there would have been nothing but Darkneſs, and Death, and all kind of woe; no news of Heaven, no hope of Heaven; yea, there could have been no Heaven unto fallen Man, without Religion. Religion doth in a ſence, give being unto Heaven: There had not been ſuch Place or State of Bleſſedneſs unto Man; neither had Man ever been capacitated *to live in Heaven*, otherwiſe than by this Religion. No wonder then, that God by his Word, doth extoll it, and advance it, as the moſt excellent, ineſtimable, invaluable, incomparable thing. *Prov.* 3. 15. *She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canſt deſire, are not to be compared to her.* And it is advanced, *becauſe it is our Life*. Prov. 4. 13. — *Keep her, for ſhe is thy Life. V.* 21, 22. — *Keep them in the*

midſt of thy heart, for they are thy Life. It is Religion, that doth make the poor deſpiſed Saints of God *the Excellent Ones of the Earth.* Pſal. 16. 3. *Prov.* 12. 26. It is Religion, that doth make the Church of God *beautifull, the perfection of Beauty, the Joy of the whole Earth.* Pſal. 48. 2. *Lam.* 2. 15. Yea, *an Eternal Excellency.* Iſa. 60. 15.

3. *That it is the Infinite Grace, Mercy, and Goodneſs of God to any People, that He doth give them Religion.* The greateſt part of the World, and of the Nations of the World are moſt miſerable without it, all the *Pagan*, and *Popiſh* World. O that ſo great, ſo much the greater part of Mankind, ſhould ſo ly buried in *groſs Ignorance*, and *Atheiſme*, without God, and Religion. 1 *Joh.* 5. 19. *The whole World lieth in Wickedneſs.* So much the more is the Mercy of God magnified to ſuch People and Nations, unto whom He hath granted Religion, in the *light*, *life*, and *power* of it. It is the happineſs, honour, and glory of any Nation, or People. It was ſo of the People of *Iſrael.* It made them great and glorious above all other Nations. *Deut.* 33. 29. *Happy art thou O Iſrael: — A People ſaved by the Lord!* And great above all Nations it alſo made them. *Deut* 4. 7. *For what Nation ſo great, that hath God ſo nigh unto them?* High alſo it made them above the Nations, *in praiſe, in name, and in honour.* Deut. 26. 19. It made them *a Crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal Diadem in the hand of their God.* Iſa. 62. 3. That God hath made *our People and Nations* (at leaſt in theſe latter Ages) ſo much a Glory among the Nations; and ſo much the Bulwark and Defence of Religion in the World, it ought to be acknowledged with Doxologie. That God hath bleſs'd poor *New-England* with ſo much of Religion; *planted theſe Heavens, and laid the foundations of this Earth* in ſuch an happy *ſubſerviency thereunto*, this we ought to commemorate with Thankfulneſs; yet not without ſome, yea much diminution of our joy and comfort, under a ſorrowful ſenſe of our preſent Defection therein.

USE. II. It ought to be for Admonition. If we are a Peo-

People of Religion, if Religion be our Life, *O let us then be Admoniſhed to take heed that we do not deſtroy our Religion, and ſo deſtroy our own Life, deſtroy our ſelves utterly and moſt miſerably, by deſtroying our Religion.* And we are the more concerned to give moſt diligent and earneſt heed to ſuch an *Admonition* and Warning; becauſe our Lord Jeſus ſeems to ſpeak to theſe Churches, as to the Church of *Sardis.* Rev. 3. 1. *I know thy works, that thou haſt a name that thou liveſt, and art dead.* That there hath been *a vital decay, a decay upon the very Vitals* of Religion, by a deep declenſion in the Life, and Power of it; that there is already a great *Death* upon Religion, little more left than *a name to live*; that *the things which remain, are ready to dye*; and that we are in great danger of dying together with it; This is one of the moſt *awakening*, & *humbling* Conſiderations of our preſent State and Condition. Oh! the many *deadly Symptoms*, Symptoms of Death, that are upon our Religion! Conſider we then how much it is *dying* reſpecting the very *Being* of it, by the general failure of the work of *Converſion*; whereby only it is that Religion is propagated, continued, and upheld in being among any People. As converting work doth ceaſe, ſo Religion doth dye away; though more *inſenſibly*, yet moſt *irrecoverably*. How much Religion is dying in the very Hearts of ſincere Chriſtians, by their *Declenſions* in *Grace*, *Holineſs*, and the *Power of Godlineſs*! How much it is *dying*, reſpecting the *viſible Profeſſion*, and *Practice* of it: partly by the *Formality* of *Churches*; but more by the *Hypocriſie*, and *Apoſtaſie* of formal, hypocritical Profeſſors! How much it is *dying* under the prevailing power of thoſe Sins and Evils, which are utterly inconſiſtent with, and deſtructive of the Life of it! Thoſe Sins continuing, and prevailing, Religion cannot live, it muſt needs dye. Such as are the deep, and general *Degeneracy* of the Generations; Unprofitableneſs under all means of Grace, Unbelief, & Diſobedience to the Goſpel; Formality, Hypocriſie, and ſpiritual Idolatry in the Worſhip of God; Prophanation, and Pol-

lutions of the Houſe of God; Slighting and Neglect of Holy Things, Intereſts, and Injoyments thereof; Worldlineſs, Prophaneneſs, Senſuality. All theſe Sins, more eſpecially when they are become the very Spirit of the Times, and Generation; when they are *penal*, and *judicial*, then they will certainly iſſue in general, and total Apoſtacy; and ſo will deſtroy, not only the life, and power, but the external Form, Order, and Intereſt of Religion alſo. Hence how is Religion dying in *Churches*! Churches, which are conſtituted on purpoſe for the propagation, and preſervation of the Life of Religion; that live, and have their being, only by the life of Religion, how little is there of the life of Religion left in them! and how are Churches themſelves *languiſhing* and *dying* together with Religion! How is Religion dying in *Families*! through the neglect of the religious Service and Worſhip of God, and of the religious Education of Children and Youth in Families. Truly, here, and hereby Religion firſt received its death's wound. Hence Religion is dying in all other Societies, among all Orders and Degrees of men, in all ways of Converſe, both Civil, and Eccleſiaſtical. O there is little, or nothing of the Life of Religion to be ſeen, or appearing either in the Frame, or Way; Hearts, or Lives of the generality of the Profeſſors of it. And that which remains thereof, *ready to dye!* How much and great cauſe have we then to take heed, that we do not quite deſtroy it. That is,

1. *Take heed that we do not exchange our Religion for the World*; that we do not commit that Heaven-aſtoniſhing Sin, which God charged his People with. *Jer.* 2. 11, 12, 13. — *But my people have changed their Glory for that which doth not profit. Be aſtoniſhed, O ye heavens, at this, & be horribly afraid, be ye very deſolate, ſaith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils: they have forſaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out ciſterns, broken ciſterns that can hold no water.* They had exchanged their God, and their Religion for the World; they had advanced the *Intereſt* of the World

World above the *Intereſt* of Religion: and thereby *Inſlaved* themſelves. *V.* 14. *Is Iſrael a ſervant? is he a home-born Slave? why is he ſpoiled?* God deſtroyed them by that *worldly Intereſt*, whereby they had deſtroyed their Religion. If once a People do ſet their hearts upon the World, ſo as to make it their higheſt and heart-intereſt, their preponderating, ruling Intereſt, which doth ſway all, and carry all before it; when the *Spirits, Principles, Counſels, and Deſigns* of a People are all for the World, ſet for the promotion, and advancement of their *worldly Intereſt*; when the Intereſt and Concernments of Religion, yea even *Religion it ſelf*, is made ſubordinate, and ſubſervient to the World; yea proſtituted by worldly men to worldly Luſts, and thereby expoſed to all kind of abuſe, ſcandal, ſhame, reproach, and made an *Opprobrium*; when the viſible Profeſſors of Religion are, not only in heart alienated from; but are become ſecret Enemies to it; when Religion is oppreſſed, and depreſſed; when it is made, not only to *ſerve*, but alſo to *ſuffer* under the riſing, ruling Intereſt of the World: *WO* then will be to ſuch a People: for they have *exchanged their Religion for the World:* therefore their Religion will dye. The ſpirit of the World, and of Worldlineſs hath been, is, and is like to be the moſt general, and powerful Principle of Apoſtacy to the profeſſing people of God: and it is often, yea ordinarily, the death of Religion: It is always ſo, when, & where it prevails.

2. *We are admoniſhed to take heed that we do not deſert Religion. If we deſert it; it will certainly dye; dye without remedy.* That we do not deſert it by withdrawing our hearts from it; or by an *Heart-apoſtacy* from God. Religion always dyes by the People's Heart-apoſtacy. *They ſet not their Heart aright — Their Heart was not right with Him.* Pſal. 78. 8, 37. *Their Heart was removed far from Him.* Iſa. 29. 13. Hence God complains ſo much, every where, of their *evil Heart*; their *hard, impenitent, unbelieving, ſtubborn, rebellious, backſliding, revolting, whoriſh Heart*; whereby they had quite deſtroyed

the

the life of their Religion. Again, that we do not desert Religion by slighting, neglecting, and exposing the *visible, external Interest and Concernments of it*; and so not only withdrawing our hearts, but our heads and hands also; I mean our labours and endeavours in whatsoever ought, and is absolutely necessary to be done and performed, for the support, upholding and maintaining of the visible Interest of Religion. Thus the People of old, in their Apostacy forsook the Temple, and the visible Worship of God, and suffered all to fall into a ruine and desolation. They deserted the whole Interest of Religion, and so destroyed it. How much the *Spirit*, the *Sins*, and the *Temptations* of the Times do incline unto such a deserting, or forsaking of Religion, we may consider, and lay to heart with deep Humiliation. For the more close Application of this Admonition, let it be considered.

1. *That when Religion is once decaying and dying, is near death, even at the point, or ready to dye,* (as *Rev.* 3. 2.) *It is then high time for Professors, and a professing People to take heed to themselves, that they be no further Accessory to the death of it.* When the Interest of the World riseth higher and higher, & all the Sins of the Times grow stronger and stronger; and Religion is growing weaker and weaker; is already grown so weak, that it hath not life, strength, or power enough left, to recover it self: It is a fearful question to such a People, whether Religion be not gone past hope of Recovery, at least in the ordinary way of the improvement of Means. Whether ever that Church of *Sardis*, and those other declined Churches were recovered, or no, by a refurrection of Religion, is more uncertain. Sure we are, they afterward *dyed*, and were *buried*, (together with their Religion) in their own ruines.

2. *When Religion dyes, all dyes with such a People.* The death of Religion destroys all kind of Life; both the Spiritual, and Political Life: It destroys Church-constitution, Order, Administrations; yea it destroys the *being* and *standing* of a People before God under his Covenant. When Religion dyes, then

then *Lo-ammi*, and *Lo-ruhamah* are born; then God ſaith, *Ye are not my People, and I will not be your God: And He will no more have mercy — but that He will utterly take away.* Hoſe. 1. 6, 8. Thus that People deſtroyed themſelves by deſtroying of their Religion; and remain dead and buried in their Graves unto this day. *Ezek.* 37. 1 — 14. If we ſhould deſtroy our Religion, we ſhould deſtroy all our *Publique Weal*; all that wherein we have been peculiarly happy, as the People of God. If once Religion dye, there will be nothing but *Death*; Death in our Hearts, Death in all our ways of Converſe: we ſhall be a *dead People.* Sin and Death do always *reign*, when and where Religion dyes and is deſtroyed.

3. *When a People deſtroy themſelves by deſtroying Religion, they periſh inevitably, utterly, & moſt miſerably.* When God doth leave a People to deſtroy Religion, then He hath no Salvation for them. By deſtroying Religion, a People do put away Salvation from them, and render themſelves utterly uncapable thereof. If God let ſuch a Peope alone; and execute no outward, temporal Judgement upon them, they will ſoon make a *miſerable end* of themſelves: for they will abuſe all their Peace, Proſperity, Means, Mercyes, Intereſts, & Injoyments, unto their own Ruin; and incurre all kind of deſtroying Evils; make themſelves a *Shame*, a *Reproach*, a *Taunt*, a *Curſe*, an *Execration*, and an *Aſtoniſhment to all People.* So did that People of old. *Jer.* 24. 9. *Jer.* 25. 18. And ſo they continue to be unto this day. No ſuch *vile, refuſe* People under heaven, as they who have deſtroyed Religion: Such a People muſt needs periſh moſt hopeleſsly. *Ezek.* 33. 10. —— *If our Tranſgreſſions and our Sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how ſhould we then live!* Obſerve, Religion being *dead and gone*, they caſt away all hope of Salvation, and give up themſelves deſperately unto Deſtruction, ſaying, *How ſhould we then live!* It is hard to produce an Inſtance of any People recovered, when they have deſtroyed Religion by a general, and total Apoſtacy from it: For it is the utmoſt height of all

Sin,

Sin, *Tranſgreſſion*, and *Provocation*, which moveth the Wrath of God to ariſe. 2 *Chron.* 36. 16. — *Untill the Wrath of the Lord aroſe againſt his People, till there was no Remedy*; or *no Healing*. By deſtroying of Religion, a People do *fill up their Sin alway, till Wrath cometh upon them to the utmoſt*. 1 *Theſ.* 2. 16. — *To fill up their Sins alway: for the Wrath is come upon them to the uttermoſt*. Furthermore, to deſtroy Religion, it is a ſin moſt directly againſt *our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; becauſe Religion, it is more peculiarly *His*; *His Work*, *His Cauſe*, and *Intereſt*: Therefore to deſtroy it, is a ſin which doth expoſe a People more directly to the dreadfull Wrath and Diſpleaſure of Chriſt. It is the greateſt Injury that can be offer'd or done to Him; and therefore He will avenge it. We know it was the Lord Jeſus who did denounce ſo dreadfully againſt all the Churches. *Rev.* 2. 5. *Elſe will I come unto thee quickly, and remove thy Candleſtick.* & *V.* 16. *Elſe will I come unto thee quickly, and will fight againſt them* —— V. 23. *I will kill her Children with death, and all the Churches ſhall know that I am He which ſearcheth the Reins and Hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.* The condition of a People or Churches is become unſpeakably woful and lamentable when Chriſt, who is the only *Mediator* and *Interceſſor* with God to procure all, both temporal, and eternal Deliverance, and Salvation, is turned againſt them, and become their Enemie: for He is the moſt dreadful Enemie; concerning whom it is written (*Exod.* 23. 21.) *Beware of Him, and obey his Voice, provoke Him not: for He will not pardon* —— & *Pſal.* 2. 12. *Kiſs the Son, leſt He be angry, and ye periſh from the way, when his Wrath is kindled but a little: bleſſed are all they that put their Truſt in Him.* Well then may any People or Churches who have any care or concernment for their own Salvation, be ſurprized with *Aſtoniſhment unto ſome degree of Horror*, under an apprehenſion of any danger of the death of Religion. It is the Infinite Mercy of God to *New-England*, that althô Religion doth *languiſh*; yet if we be admoniſhed, and take

Wa-

warning, there is ſtill hope, that it may *Revive* and *Live*. Hence the

III. *USE* Wherein the *Doctrine* is to be improved, and applied in a way of *Exhortation*. If *Religion* be our life, and if there be ſo much danger of the Death of *Religion*. *O then let all who love, and deſire life; both temporal, ſpiritual, and eternal life, and who fear death, ſo great a death; be moved to labour with all our hearts, minds, ſouls, might and ſtrength, by all ways and means, to recover, and ſave the life of Religion which is our own life.* This Exhortation propoſeth and preſſeth all the great and general Dutys of the *Covenant People of God*, at ſuch a time, and in ſuch a caſe as we are. *Moſes* applied all the whole Word of God at once, to the People by this one Word of Exhortation. *Set your hearts unto all the Words*, &c. *becauſe it is your life.* It is alſo the ſum of all which our Lord Jeſus, propounds to the declining Churches, *Rev.*3.2. *Be watchful, and ſtrengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.* I am (though moſt unworthy) called forth this day, and ſet in this General Aſſembly, to ſpeak for the life of *Religion*, to *plead in the Name of the Lord, and by the Word of the Lord*, for the *life of Religion*, to plead for the life of *dying Religion*. Oh! were the heart of *N-Engl.* rightly and fully prepared, reſolved, and ſet for the recovery and ſafety of the life of *Religion*: God would then moſt graciouſly make clear and full diſcoveries of our whole way and work therein, and of all the means thereunto: Yea, God himſelf would ſoon bring all to paſs for us. To this end we ought to be throughly convinced of, and deeply humbled (even unto ſhame and confuſion of Face) under the ſenſe of the decaying, dying ſtate of *Religion*; and withal charge, judge, condemn, loath and abhor our ſelves for all that Sin and Apoſtaſie, whereby we have brought *Religion* into ſuch a ſtate. Under ſuch Conviction and Humiliation, we muſt ſet our ſelves to labour, unto the reſurrection of *Religion*, and that with extraordinary Zeal, Courage, Faithfulneſs, and Reſolution, in the improvement of all means, with one heart, and one ſoul, as one man, even as for our

lives, and more than for our lives; ſtill acknowledging, that when we have done all that we can, *Religion* muſt be revived, not without the greateſt Miracle of Divine Power, Grace and Mercy by God himſelf, *Ezek.* 37.12. *O my People, I will open your Graves.* That we may obtain the accompliſhment of this great promiſe, it will be neceſſary;

1. *That we do under an humbling, heart-breaking ſenſe of our preſent, abſolute and extream neceſſity of the mighty power and working of the Spirit of God, in a way of Soveraign Grace and Mercy, for the recovery of the Life of Religion, labour unto an extraordinary exerciſe of Faith and Hope in God for it.* Plead, and improve his Covenant, and all his Promiſes to that end. We have great encouragement from the Word of God ſo to do., *Hoſ.*6.1,2. *Come let us return unto the Lord——After two dayes he will revive us, in the third day he will raiſe us up, and we ſhall live in his ſight.* If we could thus come unto God by Faith he would revive us: there is nothing more dangerouſly Symptomatical, than when a People grow ſenſeleſs, ſecure, ſtupid, ſottiſhly ſupine in the depth of Apoſtaſie. None of the declining Churches, ſo irrecoverably gone, as that of *Laodicea*; and that becauſe, utterly ſenſeleſs and ſecure, *Rev.*3.17.——*Becauſe thou ſayeſt I am rich, and increaſed with Goods, and have need of nothing: and knoweſt not that thou art wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* So the People of *Iſrael*; I mean the ten Tribes, when they were ſunk in their Apoſtaſie, paſt recovery, God by the Prophet *Elijah*, put them upon the utmoſt trial, by that great propoſal, 1 *King.* 18.21.——*How long halt ye between two Opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; if Baal, then follow him; and the People anſwered him nor a word:* Obſerve, *the People anſwered him not a Word*, which ſignifies plainly, that although they were fully convinced of their Apoſtaſie, and manifeſted by their ſilence, that they were judged, and ſelf-condemned; yet they were ſo ſtupid, and ſottiſh under it, that they were not at all careful nor concerned about it; nor willing to trouble them-

themſelves, their minds, or thoughts with it. God grant it may not be ſo with us.

2. *That we do carefully and very curiouſly obſerve and labour to underſtand; the Time, the Way, the Work of the Lord, when and wherein, he is graciouſly willing, and working to revive and raiſe up; yielding up our ſelves unto him, as the Subject of ſo great a Work.* It is the great unhappineſs and miſery of any declining People, not to underſtand when, and how God is labouring with them *to revive and raiſe them*, Hoſ. 11. 3. *I taught Ephraim alſo to go; taking them by their Arms: but they knew not that I healed them.* Hence it was, they abuſed all, both ordinary and extraordinary means and mercies, unto their own deeper defection, and utter deſtruction, as *Hoſ.* 7. 1. —*When I would have healed Iſrael, then the Iniquity of Ephraim was diſcovered, and the Sin of Samaria*; the more God laboured with them to heal them, the worſe they were; until (at laſt) they became wilfully unwilling to be healed; and even deſperately reſolute in their Apoſtaſie: *Jer.* 2. 25. —— *But thou ſaidſt, there is no hope, no, for I have loved Strangers, and after them I will go.* So Jer. 18. 12. Iſai. 30. 15. — This made the Prophet to lament ſo dolefully, without hope, *Jer.* 8. 18, 20. *When I would comfort my ſelf againſt ſorrow, my heart is faint in me; the Harveſt is paſt, the Summer ended, and we are not healed, for the hurt of the Daughter of my People I am hurt, I am black, aſtoniſhment hath taken hold upon me:* That which broke the heart of his hope, was, they had not known, nor improved the time, and means of their healing and ſalvation, and therefore now their caſe was hopeleſs and remedileſs: this made our Bleſſed Lord Jeſus to weep out the *Bowels of his Compaſſion* over *Jeruſalem*, in that doleful lamentation, *Luk.* 19. 41, 42. —— *And when he was come near, he beheld the City, & wept over it; if thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy Day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thine eyes.* Verſe 44. —— *Becauſe thou knewеſt not the time of thy Viſitation:* So Mat. 23. 37. —— *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſa-*

lem, &c. *How often would I have gathered thy Children*, &c: *and ye would not, behold your houſe is left unto you deſolate.* When a People do not, will not obſerve nor underſtand the time, way, and work of the Lord, and ſo refuſe to be healed, and ſaved, God doth then give them up as a *reprobate People*, Jer. 6. 29. 30. —— *The Bellows are burnt, the Lead is conſumed of the fire, the Founder melteth in vain, for the wicked are not plucked away; reprobate Silver ſhall men call them, becauſe the Lord hath rejected them.* Ezek. 24. 13. —— *Becauſe I have purged thee and thou waſt not purged, thou ſhalt not be purged any more from thy filthineſs, until I have cauſed my fury to reſt upon thee; I the Lord have ſpoken it, I will do it, I will not go back, neither will I ſpare, neither will I repent.* If a People will not be healed and ſaved, they muſt be, they ſhall be deſtroyed: O that we underſtood how much we are concerned to *diſcern, know, and improve* the preſent time; leſt the Harveſt ſhould be paſt, and the Summer ended, and the things of our peace, of our temporal, ſpiritual and eternal welfare ſhould be hidden from our eyes.

3. *That we do wait earneſtly upon God, in an extraordinary way of Humiliation and Supplication, under the Adminiſtration of his Word and Worſhip, for the diſpenſation of his Spirit, and of Converting Grace.* No hope, no poſſibility of the Reſurrection of Religion otherwiſe than by ſuch a diſpenſation of the Spirit and Grace of God, *until* God ſhall pour out his Spirit from on High, *Iſai.* 32. 15. — *Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on High, and the Wilderneſs be a fruitful Field*; that Deſtructions and Deſolations were to remain upon them, until God ſhould work a general work of Converſion, and the Reſurrection of Religion thereby. They were to remain dead and buried in their Graves, until God ſhould accompliſh that great Fundamental Covenant Promiſe, *Ezek.* 36. 26, 27. — *A new heart will I give you, and a new ſpirit will I put within you, and I will put my Spirit within you.* So Ezek. 37. 13, 14. —— *When I have opened your Graves, and brought you*

up

up out of your Graves, and ſhall put my Spirit in you, and ye ſhall live. Therefore it is high time for us to *ſeek the Lord until he rain Righteouſneſs*, Hoſ. 10. 12. O if God ſhall pleaſe to *pour out his Spirit upon our Seed, and his Bleſſing upon our Offſpring; then there will* be a glorious Reſurrection of Religion with the riſing Generation; *They ſhall ſpring up as amongſt the Graſs, and as Willows by the Water-courſes*, Iſai. 44. 34. O that we could approve our ſelves *an Humble, Penitential, Prayerful People*; prepared for ſuch a diſpenſation of the Spirit, and waiting upon God under the promiſe of it.

4. *That we ſtrengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.* This is our Lord Jeſus his Direction, in terms, *Rev.* 3. 2. keep alive and cheriſh that of the life of Religion which is left, the remains of it: O Chriſtians, let dying Religion have a *Reviving and a Reſurrection* in your hearts and lives; live it up to life again; there is, there can be nothing more of the life of Religion kept in the World, than what is preſerved and upheld in the heart of a few, (and they are comparatively but a very few) living and lively Chriſtians, there never hath been, nor ever is but a little of Religion in the life, ſpirit and power of it in this lower World; it is a very choice, rare thing in the beſt of times; but there is never leſs of it than when ſincere Chriſtians are fallen into a frame and way of Declenſion; nothing more deadly to Religion than the declenſion of Chriſtians, which ſtrikes at the very *heart and life* of it; ſo much the more ſhould you labour to riſe to the utmoſt height of attainment in Grace and Holineſs, even unto a conſpicuous eminency therein; that Religion may not only live, but ſhine in all your Converſes, throughout your whole Converſations; *that you may ſhine as Lights in the World*, Phil. 2. 15, 16. Chriſtians, if you do not thus revive, and raiſe Religion in your hearts and lives before you die, you may not expect that it will long ſurvive you: though Religion cannot die ſo long as you live, yet if you ſuffer Religion to live a *dying Life* in you, you may fear, that

(though it cannot die in you) it may notwithstanding die with you.

5. *That we set our hearts unto and upon Religion.* Make it our highest, our dearest, even our heart-interest; our whole, our all, as to Interest and Injoyment in this World; that which we live for, that which we live by, that which is our Life (*viz.*) because it is that whereby we live to, with, and upon God in Christ: let our Souls therefore be drawn forth after, and ingaged unto Religion, in esteem, love, zeal, desire, delight; that our minds may be so exercised unto the Doctrinal, Practical, and experimental Knowledge of it; as that we may be raised to real, spiritual discoveries, and apprehensions of the excellency, glory and perfection of it, with a transcendency above all the glories and perfections of this lower World: That we may account all Worldly Interests and Injoyments *but loss for the excellency of the Knowledge of it*, as the Holy Apostle did, *Phil.* 3. 8. And may by Faith also apprehend our own Interest in it, with most certain assurance that it is ours, our own, and that nothing is so, or so much ours, our own, as our Religion, that is *our God, our Christ, and our Religion*, as it is, and because it is *our life.* O if we could thus devote our selves to Religion, become true, real Votaries to Religion, Religion would then revive and live.

6. *That we set our selves in whatsoever we have, are, or can do, in a full, and direct Subserviency to the Propagation and advancement of Religion.* Lay out our selves, improve all time, strength and gifts, grace and estate, power, Authority, interest, influence, unto our utmost capacity and possibility for Religion; and that with utmost Care, Conscience, Zeal, Courage, Faithfulness; in a way of stedfast perseverance through all incounters and conflicts to the last; making of it our main design, our whole work and business, in all our transactions, both with God and Man: That we therefore labour fervently, and instantly with God in Prayer; *That*

for

for Zions ſake we do not hold our peace, and for Jeruſalems ſake we do not reſt; —— *that we never hold our peace day nor night, give him no reſt until he eſtabliſh and make Jeruſalem a praiſe in the Earth,* Iſai. 62. 1, 6, 7. That we henceforth tranſact with God, and one with another; with religious ſincerity, in truth and faithfulneſs, in and about that great and moſt important buſineſs of *Reformation*; in ſuppreſſing all the great and general Sins? and performing the great and general Duties of the times? that we triſle, diſſemble, falſifie no more therein, as heretofore we have too much done; and as the People of old did to their own ruin and deſtruction, *Jer.*3.10. *Nothing haſtned their utter defection and deſtruction more than their formal, hypocritical Reformations.* That we alſo labour to retrieve and raiſe the viſible Intereſt of Religion, and advance it *above the head of our chief joy,* Pſal. 137. 6. That we do cleave by an Heart-Engagement to the Word, Worſhip, Ordinances, Adminiſtrations, Miniſtry, Order, Rule and Government of Chriſt in his Church, to the whole *Cauſe, Intereſt and Kingdom of Chriſt.* That we *keep the Word of his Patience, and do not deny His Name, but hold faſt that which we have,* which was the Commendation and Direction given to the Church of *Philadelphia,* Rev. 3. 8, 10, 11. If thus we live and labour for Religion, then Religion will revive and live.

7. *That we ſtir up our ſelves to take hold of God, who hath hid his face from us, that is to recover and retain the preſence of God, the grace and favour of God.* If we ſuffer God to depart, Religion will die: If God depart the *Glory* will be removed, but if God return, Religion will live; for God is our life, *Deut.* 30. 20. *That thou mayeſt love the Lord thy God, that thou mayeſt obey his voice, and that thou mayeſt cleave to him, for he is thy life.* O if all thoſe who have a real intereſt in God, and who have power with God, would ſtir up themſelves, and ſet themſelves by Faith in Prayer, to take hold upon him, we might, we ſhould certainly prevail with him to return

to

to us, to abide and continue with us, as our God and Saviour, for he delights to return and meet his People in such a way, *Isai.* 64.5. *Thou meetest him that rejoyceth, and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy wayes, behold thou art wroth, for we have sinned, in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.* Our returning unto God, and Gods returning unto us, will infer a blessed Resurrection of Religion.

That we may labour effectually in all these wayes to recover and preserve the life of Religion; It is necessary:

1. *That we do and perform all with Mourning, and deep Humiliation*: Mourning for and over our selves, mourning for and over sinners, mourning over our Families, mourning over our Churches, mourning over the rising Generations, and over this whole People; mourning under the sense of our own Sins, and the Sins of others; all the Sins of the times; mourning under the sense of the dying state of Religion, mourning under the sense of Gods displeasure, of his departure, and the woful effects of both; mourning after God, after the Lord Jesus Christ, after the returns of his presence, after his pardoning, purging, reconciling, saving grace, and mercy, and all the effects thereof: O that we could do all that we have to do, even our whole work, mourning in a frame and way of mourning, with a spirit of mourning; To that end we should set our selves apart, retire our selves unto mourning, as that mourning Prophet did, *Jer.* 9.1 2. *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day & night, Oh that I had in the Wilderness the lodging-place of a way-faring man; that I might leave my People & go from them;* Mourn alone in secret places, *Jer.* 13. 17. *My soul shall weep in secret places.* We should be mourning, and alwayes without ceasing, without intermission, *Jer.* 14. 17.— *Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, let them not cease,* Lam. 3. 49. — *Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without intermission,* Mourning with a deep and bitter mourning and lamentation; sighing, and crying bitterly unto the

breaking

breaking of our loyns, *Ezek.*9.4. *Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that ſigh and cry*, Ezek,21.6. *Sigh therefore thou Son of man, with the breaking of thy loyns, and with bitterneſs ſigh before their eyes*; With an inward ſpiritual mourning, with contrition, humiliation, and much ſoul-affliction, admitting no comfort, no common or carnal comfort, *Iſai.* 22. 4. *Look away from me, I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me*; Mourning in a way of Prayer and Supplication; Pray and Mourn, and Mourn and Pray; So *Nehemiah, he wept, and mourned, faſted and prayed*, Neh. 1. 4. So Daniel, *Dan.* 9. 3. We muſt Sigh and Cry; ſighing and crying, to God is the true voice of mourning and of mourners: Our Prayers muſt be the voice of weeping, *Pſal.*6.8,9. *The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping*, we muſt mourn unto God; So *Nehemiah wept and mourned before the God of Heaven*, Nehem. 1.4. So bemoan our ſelves to him in our mourning, *that he may earneſtly remember us ſtill, and that his bowels may be troubled for us, and his compaſſions moved towards us*, Jer. 31.18,20. So mourn unto him, as that *our tears may drop into his Bottle, and be written in his Book*, Pſal. 56. 8. We muſt follow God mourning, ſeek him mourning, turn unto him mourning, *Jer.*31.9. *They ſhall come with weeping, and with ſupplication will I lead them*; Obſerve, this is the way wherein God promiſeth to revive his People, and to raiſe them up by a Reſurrection of Religion, out of their deepeſt defection, *Jere.*50.4. *In thoſe dayes, and at the time, ſaith the Lord, the Children of Iſrael ſhall come, they and the Children of Judah together, going, and weeping as they go; they ſhall ſeek the Lord their God; they ſhall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward:* Such a Mourning is the certain effect of the ſaving diſpenſation of the Spirit and converting Grace; and is the only way of turning to God in a ſaving work of Converſion and reformation, *Zech.*12. 10 11,12. *And I will pour out upon the houſe of David, and upon the Inhabitants of Jeruſalem, the ſpirit of Grace and Supplication, —— and they ſhall mourn, —— in that*

day there ſhall be a great mourning in Jeruſalem, —— And the Land ſhall mourn every Family apart, &c. Without ſuch mourning, there is no hope or poſſibility of any deliverance or ſalvation, either from ſin or judgement: if we will not mourn we ſhall periſh in our Apoſtaſie, *Ezek.*24.23. *Ye ſhall not mourn nor weep, but you ſhall pine away for your iniquities*: it is moſt fearfully ſignal to a People, when God leaves a People without a ſpirit of mourning; and takes away his Mourners, *Jer.* 16.5. *Thus ſaith the Lord, enter not into the houſe of mourning, neither go to lament or bemone them; for I have taken away my peace from this People, ſaith the Lord, even loving-kindneſs and mercys.* O if God ſhall pleaſe to frame us to ſuch a mourning, then he will moſt certainly ſave us from our Sin and Apoſtaſie, and turn us unto himſelf; then he will prepare, diſpoſe and ſpirit us unto all his work: we ſhall go on, and go through with the work of God (which now we can do nothing in) when we come to labour in it mourning, God will do all by his Mourners, *Iſai.*57.18. *I have ſeen his way and I will heal him, I will reſtore comfort to him and his Mourners.* O that we could mourn after this ſpirit of Mourners; God is ſpeaking mournfully to us by his Word, he is mourning to us by his Miniſtry, *Mat.* 11. 7. God ſets matter and cauſe of Mourning before us; the wayes and works of God towards us call for Mourning; Our Land begins to mourn under the ſins of the times; God is many wayes calling to weeping and mourning, and baldneſs, and girding Sack-cloth, *Iſai.* 22.12. O that ſincere Chriſtians, who have through Grace received the ſpirit and principle of mourning, would ſtirr up themſelves thereunto, and beg this Grace of God; it is your Calling as Chriſtians to mourn to be Gods mourners, *Sions Mourners*: O how much might you do for God and theſe Churches, in this frame and way of mourning. More eſpecially, if thoſe of the Servants of God, who are betruſted with the work of God, and the publick weal of the People, and theſe Churches, were ſuch Mourners, and did labour in

their

their work mourning; *Ezra*, *Nehemiah* were great Mourners, and the work of the Lord prospered in their hands, whilest they carried it on mourning, *Nehem.* 1.4. *Ezra* 10.1, 6. & *Joel* 2.17. *Let the Priests the Lords Ministers weep between the Porch and the Altar, and say spare thy People O Lord, — Then the Lord will be jealous for his Land and pity his People.*

2. *We must do what we do for the recovery and preservation of the life of Religion, believing and obeying the Word of God, I mean the Word of God, as it hath been Preached and Delivered unto us by his Servants in the Ministry.*

Those particular and extraordinary *Messages* which God hath sent to us by his Messengers; those full and general Testimonies which God hath given by them against all the Sins of the times, and unto all the duties of the times, amplified in the delivery of them from the Word of God, by so many solemn Words for Conversion, whereby God hath charged us plainly, expresly and fully with all our Sin and Apostasie judged and condemned us for it; declared and denounced wrath and judgement against us, in case of impenitency. Yet withal most graciously calling of us unto Repentance and Reformation, by many general Instructions, Exhortations, Directions, Motives, and Arguments, proposed and pressed by Promises, and Threatnings applied with much instancy and importunity, and set home in the Application of them, with very severe Admonitions and Warnings for our awakening: Yea God hath made Application of his Word unto us in an extraordinary way and manner, *viz.* *In that great Ordinance, wherein our Lord Jesus Christ was extraordinarily present to discover and to declare the summ of all that hath been spoken to us by the Ministry: And whereby all the Churches have declared their conviction, and published their confession and acknowledgement thereof*: Thus God hath spoken to us all that can be spoken, suitable and proper to our state and condition; we cannot tell what God can say more to us by the Ministry of his Word; than he hath done; but alas!

we have not *hearkened, nor believed, nor obeyed those words of the Lord* which have been sent unto us; so that God may justly complain of us as of them, *Jer.*7.25,26. *Since the day that your Fathers came out of the Land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my Servants the Prophets, daily rising early, and sending them, yet they hearkened not unto me, nor incleaned their ear*; and this God chargeth upon them every where as the great cause both of their utter defection from Religion and of their Destruction; *viz.* because *they would not hearken unto the Words of the Lord*, So 2 *Chron.*36.16. *Jer.* 25.8,4. & 35.15. *Zech.*7.12,13. Yea God tells them plainly, after their return from Captivity, that it would never be well with them until they had *hearkened unto the words of the former Prophets*, *Zech.*7.7. Religion was never revived and raised, they were never able to do any thing effectually in the work of Reformation; neither did God work savingly for them by his Spirit, until they had so done: Neither may we expect any recovery of Religion or Salvation from Sin and Apostasie, until we have hearkened to (that is) believed and obeyed that word. Those Words of the Lord which he sent to us, and which he is still sending unto us by his Servants: And therefore O that Unconverted ones would hearken to the Words of the Lord, which he hath sent to them for their awakening, conviction, humiliation, and conversion, *believe and obey the Gospel*? that the work of Conversion might have a general and prosperous progress, then Religion would revive and live: And that those who are the sincere People of God would also hearken to the Word of the Lord, which hath been spoken unto you; to awaken and convince you, to bring you to an humbling sight and sense of your own Sins, and of the Sins of the times, and of the wrath of God against your selves, and against this People and these Churches; as also to move and stir you up, to quicken and strengthen you unto duty, the duty of the times, the work of Christs Churches: you see all the general Sins and evils of the

times

times growing and prevailing; you see Religion decaying and dying; You see this People and these Churches sinking and in great danger of perishing in this defection and apostasie; you hear God threatning dreadfully, and have seen his hand lifted up to Execution; and you sit still do nothing, are able to do nothing; you are unable, weak and feeble as other men, unto and in the work of Reformation; you fail utterly in all your essays to it, and the reason is, because you do not hear and obey the Word of God: Believe it Christians, you will never be able to exercise your Faith, Hope, or Confidence in God, or to pray to God in good earnest, you will never be able to ingage your hearts in the work of Reformation, you will never find your selves quickened, sanctified, and strengthened thereunto; and assisted therein, until you have obeyed, and subjected your very souls to the Word of God; and so do ingage and labour in his work, under the power of his Word; there are none fit to intermeddle in Religious Reformation but those who *tremble at the Word of God*; Ezra 9. 4. *Then were assembled unto me, every one that trembled at the Word of the Lord*, Ezra. 10. 3. *Now therefore let us make a Covenant with our God —— according to the counsel of my Lord, and of those that tremble at the Commandment of God:* O Christians, did you but once *tremble at the Word of God*, you would find your Souls wonderfully raised in love, zeal and courage unto, and for his work; more especially such of the Servants of the Lord, who have any peculiar betrustments for others, and for the Publick, are more than others concerned, to subject their Souls to the power of the Word of God: Then they will find themselves extraordinarily spirited to their work, and assisted by the Spirit of God: Then they would prosper in their work, *Ezra 6.* 14. *And the Elders of the Jews builded and prospered, through the Prophesying of Haggai the Prophet and Zechariah*, Hag. 1. 12. *Then Zerubbabel, and Joshua, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the Prophet*, Ver. 14. *And*

the

the Lord ſtirred up the ſpirit of Zerubbabel, &c.—— O that we generally and fully underſtood how much we are concerned thus to hearken to the Word of God; God hath magnified his Word to *New-England*, he hath wrought powerfully and glorioufly for this People by his Word; as for his People of old, *Hoſ.* 12.13. *Truly God hath done all in New-England by his Word*: as long as we hearkened to the Word of God, *we proſpered*; if we would now hearken *all would be well*, 2 Chron. 20. 20.

3. *That we do what is neceſſary for the recovery and preſervation of the life of Religion; with holy, religious, lively, ſpiritual Devotion to God in his Worſhip, more eſpecially in his Houſe.* The loſs of which hath been, and is one great, if not the greateſt cauſe of the decay of Religion: for Religion lives much by ſuch Devotion to God in his Worſhip, and is kept alive by it. Religious Devotion it is much of the life of Religion; if we would then recover and preſerve the life of Religion; we muſt labour to have our Souls raiſed unto a very *high and dear eſteem of, and love unto a moſt ſincere and fervent Zeal for the Houſe of God, and all the intereſts and injoyments thereof*: We muſt labour to underſtand, the excellency of the Worſhip of God, and of the Houſe of God, and the bleſſednes and happineſs of thoſe who have (not only) viſible but a real ſpiritual intereſt and ſtanding therein; we muſt give up and devote our ſelves, our very ſouls unto God, in a way of holy *Fellowſhip and Communion* with him, in his Houſe in all the wayes of his Worſhip, and uphold the Worſhip of God, in the life, ſpirit, and power of it; we muſt have our hearts inlarged to take in a fulneſs of the ſpiritual and gracious preſence of God, and raiſed unto *living apprehenſions* of that preſence, with ſpiritual pleaſure, delight, Soul-ſolace and ſatisfaction therein. That our Souls may be drawn forth more & more after it, with longing deſires, & earneſt Prayer, as the Souls of Saints of old were, *Pſal.* 27.4. & 36.7. & 42.1,2. & 63.1,2. & 84.1,2,10. We muſt labour to keep the Houſe

of

of God pure, and holy, and all the ſervices and adminiſtrations of it, and to obtain a ſpiritual Soul-ſettlement therein, *Pſal.* 92.13. *Thoſe that are planted in the Houſe of the Lord ſhall flouriſh in the Courts of our God.* If we would have Religion live, we muſt really dwell in the Houſe; for there and therein Religion lives, by nothing have we more indangered and deſtroyed the life of Religion, than by *withdrawing our hearts from God in his Worſhip in his Houſe, by our formality, hypocriſie and ſpiritual Idolatry therein, by ſlighting, neglecting, prophaning, and polluting thereof, and by ſinning away the preſence of God from it*; theſe evils are deadly, they are death to Religion: ſo long as theſe evils remain, and ſo long as we remain ſo eſtranged to the Houſe and Worſhip of God, there will be no hope of the life of Religion; neither ſhall we be able to do any thing effectually for the recovery and preſervation of it.

4. *That we do what is neceſſary for the recovery and preſervation of the life of Religion, with the ſpecial preſence, and under the power of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt: Religion lives only by the preſence and power of Chriſt, who is our life, and therefore is the life of our Religion.* That we have by our ſins and miſcarriages moved our Lord Jeſus to withdraw and withhold ſo much of his preſence and power from us; thence it is that we ſuffer ſuch a privation of the life of Religion; and unleſs we obtain a return thereof, Religion will dy quite away. That we may obtain the return of the preſence and power of Chriſt, we muſt be ſenſible of, and humbled for thoſe ſins and evils whereby we have grieved and provoked him; Our unbelief and diſobedience to the Goſpel, not ſubjecting to his ſpiritual rule and government, and to the miniſterial exerciſe of his power therein; unfaithfulneſs to his cauſe, intereſt and work, diſſention, diſorder and confuſion in Churches; the loſs of our firſt love and life, and the great diſhonour to his holy Name: Theſe evils muſt be repented of, and removed. Unconverted Sinners muſt receive him, and give themſelves

ſelves to him by Faith, in a way of Goſpel-Obedience: Chriſtians muſt awake and rouſe up their ſleepy Souls out of carnal eaſe and reſt; follow him, and ſeek him until you have found him, and repoſſeſt your Souls of him, with a fulneſs of ſpiritual joy, pleaſure and delight, in your injoyments of him, as the Spouſe, *Cant.* 3.4. The Churches muſt give him free, full and open entrance and entertainment, in the greateſt fulneſs of his preſence and power, recovering their firſt life, and love, doing their firſt works; in maintaining integrity of love, peace, union, purity of communion, regularity and tranquility of order within themſelves, cleaving to his cauſe, intereſt and work, fully, ſtedfaſtly and faithfully; managing all the affairs of his Kingdom, in a way of ſincere ſoul-ſubjection to him, for the advancement of his Name and Glory. O if Chriſtians and Churches could thus prepare and diſpoſe themſelves unto the return of the preſence and power of Chriſt, they would ſoon feel themſelves enabled thereby, to perform all that is neceſſary for the recovery and preſervation of Religion; the ſad cauſe why we have hitherto Failed in all our undertakings, is the want of the preſence and power of Chriſt: O there is woful evidence of the want of it, until Chriſt return it, nothing will or can be done; the return of the preſence and power of Chriſt will inſtantly infer an happy Reſurrection of Religion; O let us ſeek it, pray and cry for it, under a deep ſence of our extream neceſſity of it, and of our woful condition without it; let us be moved hereunto from the conſideration of the gracious diſpoſition of our Lord Jeſus to return; it is yet his voice to theſe, as it was to thoſe declining Churches, after he had reproved, charged, threatned them very ſharply and ſeverely; he concludes all, *Rev.* 3.20. *Behold I ſtand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open unto me, I will come in*; by opening to Chriſt we ſhall do all, and obtain all ſalvation.

5. *That we do what is neceſſary for the recovery and preſervation of the life of Religion quickly, there muſt be a ſudden, quick*

d ſpatch

diſpatch, of all that is to be done for the life of Religion. It muſt be done preſently, inſtantly, without delay, as we would do any thing for our life, when in utmoſt and extreameſt danger; if we do not do what we have to do quickly, it may be quickly too late, and truly it will be Gods infinite mercy, if it be not already too late, as it was to them, *Luk.* 19.42. *Mat.* 23.37. O we have lingered and delayed upon utmoſt peril already; it is now high time, more than time, if we mean to do any thing, *Hoſ.* 10.12. *It is time to ſeek the Lord till he come*, God is now crying *to day, whileſt it is called to day, after ſo long a time, Pſal.*95.7. *Heb.*4.7. God calls for preſent haſt, he is every way haſtening of us; the dying ſtate of Religion, and the dangerous ſtate of this People, and of theſe Churches thereby, will admit of no further delay; God is haſtening in his way and work, *Zeph.*1.14. *The day of the Lord is near, it haſteth greatly.* Chriſt hath threatned to come againſt us quickly, *except we repent, and do the firſt works quickly*, Rev, 2. 5,16. In ſuch a caſe a People muſt be quick, *Numb.*16. 46,47. *And Moſes ſaid unto Aaron, take a Cenſer and go quickly to the Congregation, and make an Attonement for them; and Aaron took as Moſes commanded him, and ran:* O it was well for the poor People of Iſrael, in that inſtant of their extream and diſtreſſing danger, that *Moſes and Aaron, who had the care and charge of their publick Weal, were ſo quick in doing what was to be done for their publick ſafety and ſalvation.* Wherefore:

Let the general Exhortation *be humbly propoſed to the Servants of God in the Magiſtracy: Much Honoured*, It doth in the *Name of the Lord, by the Word of the Lord* in moſt ſolemn manner beſpeak your utmoſt help, and your very hearts and ſouls therein, for the recovery and preſervation of the life of dying Religion; It is your greateſt Honour that you are betruſted with ſo much of the care and charge of Religion, in the civil concerns of it. It will be both your and our *Happineſs*, if God ſhall make you inſtrumental Saviours of the life of Religion, and ſo of the life of this People; and theſe

Churches: It is your highest work, and (although the heaviest) yet the happiest part thereof, wherein you serve and subserve more directly, to the honour and glory of God, and highest good of his People: and which being fully and faithfully performed, will turn to your highest account in the day of Account, and add much weight and splendor unto your Crown of glory.

The General Exhortation, *It is also proposed to the Servants of Christ in the Ministry; the whole Order and Office & work of the Ministry it is Religious: Ordained by Christ as the great Ordinance, for the Ministerial Exercise of his Power, for the propagation and preservation of the life of Religion, by the progress of the work of Conversion and Edification among men*; and that in a more direct subordinacy to himself, and subserviency to his Name and Glory in the World: who is himself *the Shepherd and Bishop of Souls*; it is cause of deep Humiliation unto his Servants, that they have been called forth to labour under the sinking discouragement of the decaying state of Religion; that Religion should be dying under their hand, and they lament, lest they should be called to minister under that woful commission given to the Prophet, *Isai.6.10. Go, tell this People, hear ye indeed but understand not,* —— *Make the heart of the People fat,* — lest their Ministry should in just judgment be made *penal and judicial*, and so become a *savour of death unto death*, and so that they should *Preach Religion to Death, and Preach this People to death*, Hos. 6. 5. *Therefore I have hewed them by the Prophets, and slain them by the words of my mouth.* The fearful apprehensions of such a danger may move them to labour (though lamenting as Gods Servants of old) yet with so much the more care, love, zeal, even unto the *spending and consumption of their very souls, by fervency, instancy and constancy in all their prayers and soul-labours*, throughout their whole work; more especially in *travelling in birth with Souls until Christ be formed in them*; until they are born and brought forth to God in a saving work of Regeneration, which will be-

be the moſt certain way and means, unto a general Reſurrection of Religion in theſe Churches. O how ſhould they then make full proof of their Miniſtry, and approve themſelves throughly, in their life, in their labour, in all their miniſtrations, in their whole miniſterial Converſations, as thoſe who are more than any other Order of Men in the World, directly charged and betruſted; yea ſet for the life of Religion, and the ſalvation of Souls.

The Exhortation it is further propoſed, as in our Text and Context unto all Iſrael, and Moſes made an end of ſpeaking all theſe words to all Iſrael. It was his final farewel Exhortation *to all the whole Covenant People of God*; The People of theſe Churches, both the paſſing, ſtanding, and riſing Generations, are all the viſible *Covenant people of God*; and therefore Religion it is *our life*,: we ought generally to care, labour, pray, cry to God for the recovery, preſervation and continuance of it, *as for our life.* You who are ſincere Chriſtians are here again moved by this Exhortation; (not only (as before) to keep Religion alive in your own hearts) but alſo to *diſcharge your ſelves fully and faithfully, in whatſoever duty or ſervice, you may, can, or ought to labour for the general Reſurrection of Religion in theſe Churches*: More eſpecially wherein you may be (any of you) betruſted with any of the concerns of it, either Civil or Eccleſiaſtical; Truly Chriſtians, the great incumbency, the *burthen* of the work it is upon you, the work it is moſt properly yours; Becauſe Religion it is peculiarly yours; you are under the moſt ſacred and indiſpenſible obligations, both unto God, and one unto another to uphold it; it is the moſt general duty of that high, holy and heavenly Calling, wherewith you are called to be Saints, and wherein you are to approve your ſelves eminently the Servants of God, and of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; for the defence and advancement of his Cauſe, Intereſt, Kingdome, Name and Glory, wherein we ſhall live and dye as Saints, obtaining thoſe glorious promiſes which Chriſt made to thoſe who laboured

faithfully for the recovery of Religion in those declining Churches of *Asia*, Rev. 2. 7. *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the middest of the Paradise of God*: and ver. 10. *And I will give thee a Crown of life*: ver. 17. *To him that overcometh, I will give to eat of the hidden Manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new Name which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it*, Rev. 3. 5. *He that overcometh, the same shall be cloathed in white Raiment.* Ver. 12. *Him that overcometh will I make a Pillar in the Temple of my God*, Ver. 21. *To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me on my Throne*, &c. that is in Heaven: O what exceeding *great and precious Promises* hath our Lord Jesus made for the incouragement of those who are his *Sincere Servants*, to labour to uphold Religion in declining times and Churches; we believe and are upon good grounds perswaded that there are many, that there are enough *Sincere Christians* yet remaining in these Churches, to do and perform whatsoever is necessary for the recovery and preservation of Religion; and that if you would do what you might and ought, Religion would not die but live, and flourish with much spiritual prosperity. Will it not then be a *confounding shame and scandal unto this Generation of New-England Christians* before the World: If having had Religion transmitted to us by our Fathers (who through the grace of God, upheld it in so much of the power and purity of it, while they lived) and being still priviledged with all Religious interests and injoyments, as the highest advantages and incouragements, to preserve the life of Religion; we should notwithstanding, through our carelesness, slothfulness, unfaithfulness, suffer to decay, languish, and dye away; yea and by our own declensions, therein give it a mortal wound. Surely if Religion die, Christians will (in this respect) be more *inexcusably guilty* of the death of it than others: O let this be considered and laid to heart.

The general Exhortation speaks also to Churches, as such: Religion, in the most proper sence of the *Text* and *Doctrine*, is most

moſt properly the *life of Churches*, it is that which gives them being, and which is the great end of their being. God hath conſtituted Churches both by *Religion*, and for *Religion*; therefore it is the great deſign, and ought to be the great work of Churches to propagate and preſerve the life of it, that is recovering and maintaining Holineſs & Purity in Eccleſiaſtical conſtitution, union, communion, adminiſtrations, both of Doctrine and Worſhip; by religious fear, reverence, ſincerity, and ſolemnity, in all Religious Aſſemblies, Attendancies, Performances, and Churches tranſactions in the Name of Chriſt, by Zeal, Courage, Faithfulneſs, in the whole work of Chriſt, and in the management of all the Affairs, and the whole intereſt of Religion; *Let him that hath an ear hear what the ſpirit ſaith to the Churches.*

The Exhortation ſpeaketh alſo unto Families; Parents, Maſters, Heads of Families, to move you to keep Religion alive in your Families; by being truly Religious your ſelves, in all your Family converſes; by training up your Children and Servants Religiouſly, unto and for Religion; by exerciſing and upholding the Worſhip of God in all the wayes of it, and in the Life, Spirit and Power of it in your Families: hereby Religion ſhall live in Families; Thus *Abram*, Gen. 18, 19. *I know him that he will command his Children and Houſhold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord.*

The Exhortation ſpeaketh to all who are the Children of the Covenant, and of the Promiſe; though you may at preſent have no ſaving Knowledge and Experience of, or Intereſt in Religion, and therefore no hearts ingagement to it, or hearty care or concernment for it; but are in your preſent ſtate and way, Enemies unto it. Yet O Remember that Religion is your life alſo; you have been born and bred up under the viſible diſpenſation of the Covenant and Kingdom of God, in the Houſe of God for *Religion*; and therefore if you have any care of your Souls, or hope of Salvation; if you would not be caſt off for ever, as a Reprobate Generation, a Generation of Gods wrath; O

apply

apply your ſelves to Religion, approve your ſelves Religious, labour by all means to make Religion *your own*, in a ſaving work of Converſion; prepare your ſelves to undertake and uphold a pure and ſincere Profeſſion and Practice of it, that you may not only keep it your ſelves, but tranſmit it to ſucceeding Generations; then Religion ſhall be your life alſo; *Then the Lord your God will be with you as he was with your Fathers, he will not leave you nor forſake you*, 1 King.8.57. And now O that all, *who do underſtand and believe any thing, either concerning God or their own Souls, concerning good or evil, life or death, Heaven or Hell; may at leſt ſo far take notice of, and bare this Exhortation, as to ſuffer themſelves to be moved thereby, no more to ſlight or ſet light by Religion; but to have high and appreciating thoughts of Religion*; moſt ſeriouſly and ſolemnly to conſider of the eternal concernment of your own immortal Souls therein, in the Being, Life, and Continuance of it, as that whereby you may live ſpiritually, live eternally, and without which you will moſt certainly periſh, inevitably, utterly, and everlaſtingly.

May we not, ought we not all, in the concluſion, to *reinforce this Exhortation upon our Souls, by that vehement conteſtation, whereby* Moſes *doth in a moſt ſolemn and awful manner* (*as it were*) *conjure that People unto Faith and Obedience*, Deut.30. 19. *I call Heaven and Earth to Record againſt you this day, that I have ſet before you life and death, bleſſing and curſing; therefore chuſe life, that both thou and thy Seed may live; that thou love the Lord thy God, and obey his voice —— and cleave to him for he is thy life.* When God doth thus ſet *life and death* before his Covenant People; and put them to their full *Trial, as to final choice*, O then it is their moſt important Duty and Intereſt to *chuſe life*, that both they and their Seed may live; May we not with fear and trembling apprehend our ſelves: even theſe Churches, and this *whole People, New-England*, as it were ſtanding before God, upon our great Trial for *Life and Death.* O that we underſtood that the *great caſe of Life and*

Death

Death is now depending between God and *New-England*, what reason have we to take heed, *as for our lives*, how we approve our ſelves upon this great trial; that God hath ſet Life and Death before us, all the World is witneſs, Heaven & Earth may *be called to record againſt us*, that he hath done it: God hath ſet Life before us, by ſetting the *whole way of Life before us*; his *Law*, his *Goſpel*, his *Covenant*, his *Kingdom*, all both *Temporal*, *Spiritual* and *Eternal* good, he hath ſet Religion before us, and exhibited *himſelf* unto us through his Son as *our life*. God hath alſo ſet Death and Curſing before us, by ſetting all our whole way of Sin and Apoſtaſie before us, the whole *way of Death* and *Deſtruction* which we have been walking in, as alſo by ſetting both *Temporal* and *Eternal* Judgement before us, in thoſe Threatnings which have been denounced againſt us.

This propoſal of *Life and Death* hath been made in an extraordinary *way and manner*, by the concurrent *voice and cry of the Miniſtry*; more eſpecially by ſuch of the Servants of God whom he had made *eminently able and faithful*, who have finiſhed their *Teſtimony*, and are removed: God hath alſo made this Diſcovery and Propoſal of Life and Death *general*, to all *Sorts*, *Orders* and *Degrees*, to all the *Churches*, to all the *People* in all the *Congregations*; and God continueth thus to ſet *Life and Death* before us, by all ſeaſons and opportunities, but more *plainly*, *expreſly*, *fully*, *and generally*, upon ſuch occaſions, and in ſuch *General Aſſemblies* as theſe, and that with extraordinary Solemnity: It hath been Gods great work of late to ſet *Life and Death*, *Bleſſing and Curſing* before us; by the *Miniſtry of his Word*, and he is ſo doing unto *this day*; wherein God is yet in *infinite Mercy*, crying unto us; *Chuſe life that both you and your Seed may live.*

By this Word, God is once more calling after this Generation of Unconverted Sinners. You who are yet in *your ſins*, in a ſtate and way of Sin and Death, remaining ſecure and ſenceleſs therein; who have heretofore, and hitherunto ſlighted, neg-

lected

lected, and rejected all the Calls of the Gospel, and all the Ministerial offers of eternal life, through Jesus Christ: After all the proposals of life, after all the calls, commands, and perswasions that you have been under, to move you to chuse Life. *You are now, this day, once more called, commanded, perswaded; yea intreated, beseeched and prayed, in the Name of the Lord, and by the Word of the Lord to chuse Life.* Our Lord Jesus is most graciously pleased by the Ministry of this Word, to exhibit himself, in all his fulness and sufficiency, of Grace and Life, *all, an Alsufficient Saviour*, and is *crying in this General Assembly*, unto *New-England* Sinners; *to chuse him, to come to him, that they may have life*: as once he did by his own personal Ministry, in a *General Assembly* of that People, far greater than this, *John* 7.37.—— *In the last and great day of the Feast, Jesus stood and cried, if any man thirst let him come unto me and drink, he that believeth on me*, &c.— You have been set, and have been continued under an extraordinary improvement of all means, in this your day of Grace, which is continued, and protracted, beyond the ordinary date of divine patience, by an extraordinary protraction of longsuffering, in a way of *probation and trial*; God hath been trying, and proving of you, and waiting upon you a great while: But know that *his Spirit shall not alwayes strive*, Gen. 6. 3.— *He hath limited a certain day*, beyond which he will not wait, *Heb.*4.7. and upon a supposition, that God hath so limited a *certain day*, whereby he hath dated his patience and longsuffering, and the period of the present day of Grace, unto this Generation of Sinners; you may sadly conclude, that you live under the *latest* and *last*, the *final* and *farewel* calls and cries of Mercy, by the *Ministry* of the Word, that God will not much longer call and cry after you, nor strive with you, therefore you are warned *to flee from the wrath which is to come*, Mat.3.7,12. *And now also the Ax is laid to the root of the Tree, therefore every Tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewen down and cast into the fire.* You are in extream danger,

under

under the power and working of that *ſpirit of unbelief and diſobedience to the Goſpel*, which is the Spirit of the times and whereby the Generation that is the generality of Sinners are ſo ſtrongly inclined and carried out to *refuſe Life and chuſe Death*. It is much to be feared that many, if not the moſt, have already ſo done, and are accordingly in dreadful judgement, given up by God unto that fatal choice, *Pſal.* 81. 12. *So I gave them up to their own hearts luſts*, &c. O it is high time then; now, *now if ever* (becauſe you may fear now or never) to *chuſe life*, to chuſe *Spiritual, Temporal, and Eternal Life*; to make that great, comprehenſive, unchangeable, eternal Choice, upon which depends not only the Salvation of your own Souls, but even the deliverance and ſalvation of this People, and theſe Churches: If you do thus chuſe Life, all will be well with *New-England*, but if you ſhould refuſe generally to chuſe Life, you will be likely, not only to deſtroy your ſelves; but all poſterity: it would be fearfully ſignal if any ſinners ſhould be ſo prodigiouſly hardened, and heightned in their impenitency and unbelief, as to be raiſed unto that preſumptuous and deſperate reſolution with thoſe in the Prophet *Iſai.* 22. 13, 14.—— *Let us eat and drink for to morrow we ſhall die*; I have no other word to leave upon ſuch but that which follows in the next verſe; *And it was revealed in mine ear by the Lord of Hoſts, ſurely this iniquity ſhall not be purged from you, till you die.*

God is alſo by this word calling upon his own Servants to chuſe Life; though you have already made the great and moſt happy choice of Life for your own Souls, laſt ſpoken of; yet you are further to chuſe life, that is, all the wayes and means of life, whatſoever may any way conduce unto the furtherance of the work of Converſion, and the progreſs of Reformation, the recovery of the life of Religion: Chuſe *indeed*, that is, chuſe it *practically*, make a practical choice of it, that is, chuſe it ſo, as to make it your work: You are in this reſpect, not only to chuſe life for your ſelves, but for others,

chuſe life for your Families, for your Children and Servants, Joſh. 24.15. *Chuſe you this day whom ye will ſerve —— But as for me, and my Houſe we will ſerve the Lord.* It was a time wherein all the People were put to their choice; and *Joſhuah choſe for himſelf and his Houſe*: Again, *chuſe life for the Churches*; It is with *a few of the ſincere Servants of God to chuſe life for the Churches*; O chuſe *the way and work of Church Reformation, and all means and helps thereunto*; Life and Death is in this reſpect ſet before Churches; if the Servants of God, in them *chuſe life* for them, the *Churches will chuſe life*: Finally *chuſe life for the People*; the Servants of God in their ſeveral places and ſtations, according to their betruſtments, ought to *chuſe life for the People*; chuſe all things that do conduce to the preſervation of the *life of this People*, in all the forementioned reſpects: O it is a great thing to be *charged and betruſted with the life of a People, the viſible People of God; the publick weal, the life of a People hath great dependance upon the Wiſdome and Faithfulneſs of thoſe who are, and ought to chuſe life and bleſſing for them.*

Thus God hath ſet *New-England* between *Ebal* & *Gerazim*, he hath life and bleſſing on the one hand, death and curſing on the other hand & brought us to a *Trial* what we will chuſe, it is Gods way and work with us ſo to do by all his diſpenſations; what the iſſue will be, what *exit* we ſhall make upon this trial, is awful, conſiderable. O that it might be the holy will of the bleſſed God to *chuſe life and bleſſing for us*, and inable us by his ſpirit and grace to *chuſe it for our ſelves*; and not ſuffer us to run upon our own ruin, by the *fatal, woful choice of death.*

Wherein we ſhall make our ſelves moſt inexcuſably both ſinful and miſerable; becauſe we have been warned, according to the charge that God hath given unto his Watch-men, *Ezek.* 33.3, ——8. *The Trumpet hath been blown, and the People have been warned*: It hath been the greateſt care and concernment of thoſe of Gods faithful *Watchmen*, who have had fulleſt

fulleſt diſcoveries of our extreameſt dangers, both by ſin and judgement, ſo to diſcharge themſelves as to *deliver their own Souls*, that they might themſelves be clear from the *blood of all men*: Hence all ſorts of People and Perſons have been warned, *Unconverted Sinners* have been warned of their danger of periſhing in unregeneracy; *Common Profeſſors* have been warned of their danger of periſhing in Hipocriſie and Apoſtaſie; *Worldly People* have been warned of their danger of periſhing in their Worldlineſs and Senſuality; *Prophane Perſons* have been warned of their fearful danger of being cut off in their high-handed and preſumptuous Wickedneſs, and that with more ſignal inſtance of the dread and terror of Gods revenging juſtice both in their temporal and eternal deſtruction: *Chriſtians* alſo have been warned of the dangerous effects and conſequents of their declenſions, and of their ſecurity therein: All *Orders* and *Degrees* of Perſons have been warned; *Families* have been warned, *Churches* have been warned, all other *Societies* have been warned; conſequently all *New-England* hath been warned: warned of all *Sins*, of all *Duty* of all *Danger*; we have had full, plain Warning, many warnings, all kind of warnings; particular, perſonal, and private warnings, general and publick warnings; warnings from the Word of God, warnings from the Works of God; ſome dreadful and terrible warnings God hath given us from Heaven, and in all theſe wayes we have had long warning, many years warning. The Lord is now by his Word teſtifying on the behalf of his *Watchmen* (more eſpecially thoſe who have finiſhed their Teſtimony, by faithful warning given, and have thereby delivered their Souls, and are at reſt) *that they have warned us and we have been warned*; Yea, God *is calling Heaven and Earth to Record for himſelf* againſt us, that he hath warned us: and therefore if we will not take *warning*; to repent, reform, and turn to God, but periſh in our Sins and Apoſtaſie, *Our blood will be upon our own heads, the Lord and his Throne will be clear, and his Servants guiltleſs*, Ezek. 33. 4. *Then whoſoever*

heareth the ſound of the Trumpet, and taketh not warning, if the Sword come and take him away, his blood ſhall be upon his own head —— He heard the ſound of the Trumpet, and took not warning, his blood ſhall be upon him —— So thou O Son of Man, I have ſet thee a Watch-man to the houſe of Iſrael, *therefore thou ſhalt hear the Word at my mouth, and ſhalt warn them from me,* ver. 9. —— *If thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, if he do not turn from his way, he ſhall die in his iniquity; but thou haſt delivered thy Soul*; This God will have declared for the vindication of his Juſtice, in the execution of his Judgements, and that if we are deſtroyed by and in our ſins, we may be forced to acknowledge, that God is holy, righteous and juſt, and that *our deſtruction is of our ſelves*; wherefore it follows, *ver.* 11. *Say unto them, as I live,* ſaith the Lord God, *I have no pleaſure in the death of the Wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way & live; turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye dye, O Houſe of Iſrael.*

Whence in the cloſe of all, we have comfort and incouragement, in hope that if yet we will take warning, God is and will be moſt graciouſly diſpoſed, in a way of ſoveraign and prerogative mercy, to revive, raiſe us up, and cauſe us to live in his ſight.

Notwithſtanding all that hath been ſpoken concerning the death of Religion: we muſt underſtand, that Religion, it is in it ſelf *an immortal thing*; it cannot die nor be deſtroyed: all the powers of darkneſs cannot deſtroy Religion; although this or that people may loſe the life and being of it, and deſtroy themſelves by Apoſtaſie from it. Yet notwithſtanding Religion *ſhall live*, & have its being in the World; & there will be a general and glorious *Reſurrection of it*, in the ſucceſſive accompliſhment of thoſe *Promiſes* & *Propheſies* which the people of God in all ages have believed & hoped for: & God brought forth our Fathers with a *gracious deſign*, to give Religion a being in this *Land of Darkneſs*, which was then none other than the *Region of the ſhadow of Death*. We have been Originally a People *ſeperated and ſet apart* unto and for *Religion*; we have

ſeen

ſeen as much of the beauty and glory of it, experienced as much of the light, life, power, grace and bleſſing of it, injoyed as much tranquility, proſperity, and felicity, in the profeſſion and practice of it, as ordinarily hath been or can be: we may therefore comfortably and confidently believe and pray, that God will keep Religion alive with us, and not ſuffer it to be totally extinguiſhed in theſe ends of the Earth; which we believe God hath given to his Son *for an Inheritance, and for a firm Poſſeſſion.* We are a People who have yet a *Covenant Right* unto and *Intereſt* in Religion; yea, God hath yet a ſincere, faithful People in *New-England*, who have a *ſpiritual heart-Intereſt* in Religion; and ſome among them who are his *Mourners*: whoſe very Souls are labouring by Faith and Prayer, in a way of deep humiliation and mourning before God for the life of Religion. And therefore (although (we being deeply and generally declined) God may cauſe us to paſs under purging and refining diſpenſations: and be unto us *like a Refiners fire, and like Fullers Sope*, Mal. 3. 2. *Turn his hand upon us, purely purge away all our Droſs, and take away all our Tyn*, Iſai. 1. 25. *Though God may viſit our tranſgreſſion with a rod, and our iniquity with ſtripes, nevertheleſs his loving-kindneſs he will not utterly take from us, nor ſuffer his faithfulneſs to fail, his Covenant he will not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his Lips*, Pſal. 89. 32, 33, 34. Although God doth ſometimes ſave his People in ſuch a way, yet ſuch Salvation will be wrought out by the *Reſurrection of Religion*; which is the moſt great and glorious Salvation, which God works for his People in this World; and wherein he is moſt exalted, magnified and glorified: O why may not we then have and profeſs our Faith, Hope and Confidence in God for ſuch Salvation, as the Church, *Micah* 7. 7, 8. *Therefore I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my Salvation, my God will hear me, rejoyce not againſt me O mine Enemy, when I fall I ſhall ariſe, when I ſit in darkneſs the Lord ſhall be a light unto me; I will bare the indignation of the Lord, becauſe I have ſinned againſt*

him, until he plead my cause, &c. We have great incouragement thus to wait for God; because God is waiting, that he may be gracious unto us, *Isai.* 30. 18. *And therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you, for the Lord is a God of Judgement, and blessed are all those that wait for him*: O when God thus saves *New-England* by the resurrection of Religion, we shall rejoyce and triumph in his Salvation; as the Church, *Isai.* 25. 9. *And it shall be said in that day, lo this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us, this is the Lord we have waited for him, we will rejoyce and be glad in his Salvation*; For then we shall sing as heretofore *in the height of Zion, and flow together unto the goodness of the Lord*, *Jer.* 31. 12. Then will be (in a measure) fulfilled in us, and for us what is propheſied and promiſed, *Zeph.* 3. 12——17. *I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor People, and they shall trust in the Name of the Lord; the remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth, for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid: Sing O Daughter of Zion, shout O Israel, be glad and rejoyce with all thy heart O Daughter of Jerusalem, the Lord hath taken away thy judgements, he hath cast out thine enemy. The King of Israel, even the Lord is in the midst of thee, thou shalt see evil no more — the Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save, he will rejoyce over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing*, and Hos. 14. 4. &c. *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him; I will be as the dew unto Israel, he shall grow as the Lilly, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon:— They that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the Corn, and grow as the Vine, the scent thereof shall be as the Wine of Lebanon: Ephraim shall say, what have I any more to do with Idols. I have heard him, and observed him; I am like a green Fir-Tree, from me is thy fruit found: Who is wise and he shall understand these things, prudent and he shall know them, for the wayes of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein.*

FINIS.

Advertiſement.

THere is now in the Preſs, *An Eſſay for the Recording of Illuſtrious Providences*; wherein an Account is given of many Remarkable, and very Memorable Events, which have hapned in this laſt Age, eſpecially in *New-England*:
By the Reverend Mr. *INCREASE MATHER*.

1380 s